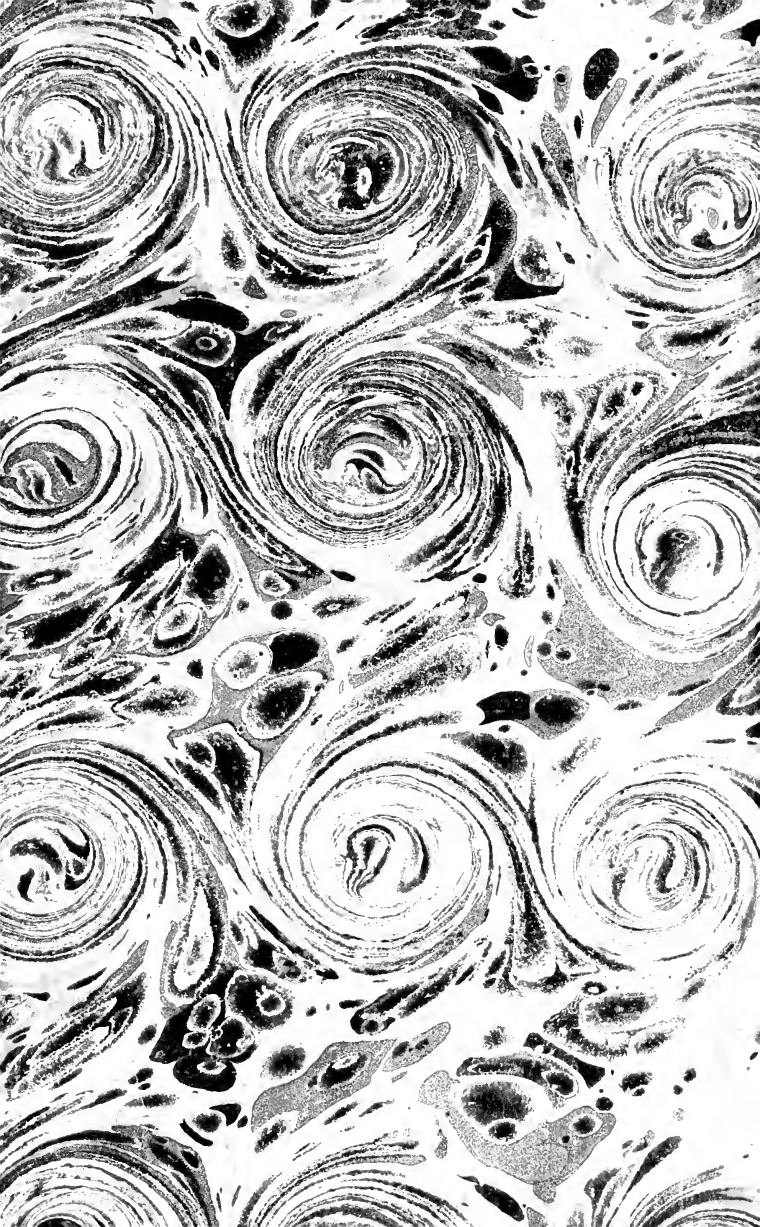


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A history of the Reformation
on the Continent



A
HISTORY
OF THE
REFORMATION
ON
THE CONTINENT.

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DEAN OF DURHAM,

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
DUNCAN AND MALCOLM, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1841.

LONDON :
Printed by WILLIAM CLOWES and Sons,
Stamford Street.

P R E F A C E.

It is scarcely necessary to say that these volumes, ending with the death of Luther, do not contain a complete History of the Revolution which they profess to describe; they do not extend even to the earliest epoch assigned as that of its termination, nor do they treat, perhaps, with sufficient minuteness all the occurrences of the period which they embrace. There are, besides, some important observations, as to the influence of the Reformation on the political, social, and literary character of after-ages—a subject on which extremely different opinions prevail among learned men—which have been omitted, if I may not rather say deferred: for these deficiencies have been, for the most part, occasioned by an unexpected interruption, which has turned my attention, during the last few months, to other objects, and it is my purpose, should health and some literary leisure be continued to me, to supply them in a Fourth and concluding Volume.

Still, it is with much anxiety and diffidence that I submit this production to the public. The subject is one of great magnitude and difficulty, and very peculiar talents are required for its perfect treatment. Yet, as many thought that our national literature is almost discredibly defective in this department, and as I was not uninstructed in the earlier annals of

the church, nor unpractised in historical investigation, I ventured to undertake the task. I have pursued it, amidst other important occupations, through seven assiduous years, with moderate powers, indeed, but with the single predominant purpose of doing justice and speaking truth; and I have not been negligent in imploring that succour, without which all our powers and purposes are vain.

These considerations, by protecting me from self-reproach, will enable me to bear with equanimity the censures of others—censures which will not, however, be hastily admitted or lightly advanced by any man who has trodden the same paths in the same spirit with myself; who has toiled through the long and often obscure, and not always attractive, records of those perplexed ages, with no partial, or polemical, or sectarian object; who knows how scanty are the fruits when compared with the labour of collecting them; and who will doubtless have learnt, if not from his own experience, at least from the lapses of the ablest of his predecessors, that the most cautious attention will not always preserve the most vigilant inquirer from inadvertency and error.

THE AUTHOR.

February 9, 1841.

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ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

VOL. I.

Page 14, line 3, *for this read the.*

It should be mentioned that the states of all the members of the Germanic body, no less than those of the electors, were free from the direct control of the Emperor. Their independence may, indeed, already have been somewhat curtailed by the permanent establishments created by the Diet of 1595, for the maintenance of the peace of the empire and the general administration of political justice. The outrages of the most unruly knights and nobles, who still clung to the old barbarous right and practice of private warfare, were unquestionably repressed. But the Emperor yet possessed very little acknowledged power over the members of the Diet; and the frequent deliberations of that numerous body, swelled as it was by the representatives of the free cities, were not calculated, I think, to enlarge his authority over the several states which composed it.

P. 15, l. 15.—The subject of those perpetual disputes between the bishops and magistrates of the imperial cities, was generally the limit of their respective jurisdictions. Indeed, we ought never to lose sight of the fact, that the Roman Catholic church (as has been well observed) was not merely a religious organisation; it was, besides, an enormous aggregate of temporal property and temporal powers and functions—great powers exercised under a foreign head and for the profits of foreigners in a great measure. The priests were at that time not merely religious teachers and professors, but a vast and powerful order in society, yet subject to the condition of exercising their power through the physical arm of others. It was these temporal powers which continually brought the church into collision with the most active and stirring portions of the laity, and made them objects of jealousy and hatred. These were pre-disposing causes, which showed themselves at almost every Diet between the council of Basle and the appearance of Luther, and stand among the most obvious preliminaries of the Reformation.

P. 20.—The administrative committee of the empire (das Reichs regiment) which had been very lately created and assembled, despatched to Pope Alexander VI. an embassy and remonstrance on the general violation of the concordat of Basle, and on ecclesiastical grievances and

exactions; but particularly upon the money which was extracted from Germany by means of the sale of Indulgences, under pretence of their being applied for the defence of Christendom against its enemies, but not really so applied.

In 1501 the Diet of Nuremberg passed a resolution to detain two-thirds of the money then accruing throughout Germany from the sale of Indulgences (on occasion of the centenary jubilee) for the exclusive purpose of defence against the Turks, and to permit only one-third to go into the possession of the papal legate.

These two facts have been furnished me (from the Sophronizon of Paulus) by a learned friend, who remarks on them: In neither case is there any objection to the selling of Indulgences—the objection is taken to the application of the proceeds.

P. 55, l. 23.—Erase the word *hundred*.

P. 64, l. 5.—Perhaps “*apud hominem*” should rather be translated “in the sight of man.” Such is certainly the grammatical interpretation of the words. Yet the other was, more probably, what Luther meant. One has often this perplexity in interpreting his writings.

P. 108, l. 10, &c.—My remarks are here confined to the “despotism of the Pope;” I do not intend to apply them to the disputed doctrines of his church. The censures which I have ventured on “the method of the scholastics,” (or “the abuse of Aristotle,” for it is the same thing) are not, I hope, too general. I have never denied that it has sometimes produced good results; nor would I dispute, that even that exercise of the intellectual powers, trammelled as they were and circumscribed by forms and technicalities, may have been preferable to absolute inactivity and torpor. Yet I cannot readily admit that to have been a sound method of reasoning, which engendered such amazing frivolities and sophistry; nor can I agree with those who think, that the absurdity of the conclusions proceeded in all cases, or in most cases, from the falsehood of the data.

P. 154, l. 21.—It is not intended by this remark to imply, that the very lowest classes throughout Germany were generally adverse to the enterprise of Luther, however ill they may have been disposed at Augsburg—still less so, as the Reformation made progress. Doubtless its most trustworthy and intelligent supporters were to be found in a somewhat higher condition; but the accounts of the rustic insurrections of that period attest the hatred existing among the lowest against the wealth and the supremacy of ecclesiastics. This may have been the extent of their feeling on the subject; but even this would incline them towards Luther.

HISTORY

OF THE

REFORMATION.

CHAPTER I.

Condition of the Church at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century—Systems of learning—that of Aristotle—that of the Humanists—the limits of their Operation—Erasmus—General progress of intellectual Improvement—Exertions of Maximilian—Numbers of eminent Individuals—Theology alone made no advance—The security of the High Papists, and the causes of it—Fidelity of the Princes and Universities—Peace at home and abroad—No important or dangerous heresy or schism—The attempts at Reformation had been thwarted—The court of Rome more decorous than heretofore—The Pope personally had many attractive qualities—The progress of commercial intercourse and civilisation—and of education through the Art of Printing—No Grievances had been redressed—nor were the heresies absolutely suppressed—nor the principles of Self-Reformation extinct—Particular condition of Switzerland—Of Germany—Imperial Cities—Every thing was in progress except the Church—It was clear that some change must befall it, though what or whence was uncertain—The doctrine of Indulgences as then professed—Gradual corruption of the practice from the Bull *Unigenitus* to the end of fifteenth century—Indulgences of Innocent VIII., and dissensions occasioned—Others in 1515 and 1516—Faint attempt at resistance by Maximilian—Grant of Leo X. to Albert, Archbishop of Mayence—The Instructions of Albert—The agency of John Tetzel—The pretext was the restoration of St. Peter's—Manner of preaching the Indulgences, proclamations, processions, &c.—Expressions employed by Tetzel—Form of Absolution—Observations.

It is no longer necessary to enter into any particulars in order to prove, that very great abuses prevailed in the Roman Catholic Church at the beginning of the sixteenth

century, because there is not now any writer who would affect to dispute that fact. Much of the system, as it was then administered, from the pomp of the Vatican down to the ceremonies of the most obscure congregation—from the morals of the court of Rome down to those of the sensual monk and concubinary priest, was in direct opposition to the law of Christ, and even to the first principles of human virtue. Yet was it no easy matter to overthrow, or even to correct it. The roots of the church were fixed in the credulity and devotion of the multitude; and it might hope to stand unhurt, unaltered, so long as it could retain its authority there. “It is with the vulgar” (says Pallavicino, than whom none had examined more closely the springs of the ecclesiastical machinery,) “it is with the vulgar, that the supreme power finally rests; and there, if not in reason, at least in fact, is the supreme tribunal.”* Such is especially the condition of a spiritual despotism. It may lean on the occasional interest of princes,—it may court the precarious favour of the great; but its last appeal is to the fidelity of the common people.

Thus it was, that the power of Rome could not be at all seriously or generally shaken, until her enemies could gain some access to the minds of the vulgar; and this could only be brought to pass by a somewhat general diffusion of at least the first elements of reasoning and learning. It was the work of ages to reach this point. The papal system laid its foundations in utter darkness and on the ignorance of mankind. It was strengthened and enlarged and surrounded with a thousand outworks, during a long period of scarcely less obscurity. The first light which appeared was that of Aristotle. The churchmen regarded it with suspicion, and would willingly have removed or extinguished it.

* “*Istoria del Concilio di Trento*,” lib. i. cap. ix.

But since this could not be, they bestirred themselves to apply it to their own uses ; and, as they were in possession of all that then existed of education and intelligence, they entirely succeeded. The method of dialectics was, by its very nature, adapted to their purposes ; the manner of argument prescribed by it was well suited to the perpetuation of error ; and though it was not always so employed, yet it remained an irresistible weapon in the hands of the polemics, who acquired, by long experience, the most sophistical address in the use of it ; who preserved and sharpened it in their own academies, and turned it with never-failing success against the first faint trembling movements of reviving truth.

After the fall of Constantinople the west was visited by another form of learning ; and this too was in the first instance an object of terror to the Papacy. Yet this, like its predecessor, was presently patronised by the most enlightened pontiffs ; and it enjoyed, with some intervals of disfavour, the countenance of the Vatican, from the time of Æneas Sylvius to that of Leo X. But the Chief of the church was in this matter more liberal than the mass of his ecclesiastical subjects. A clamour of disapprobation issued from the monasteries ; the halls of the universities were long closed against the stranger, and the scholastic Divines who presided there began to tremble for their dominion. An open warfare presently broke out between these rivals ; and the Humanists of Rome, if they imagined that their new literature would prove as obsequious a tool to the Papacy as the ancient method, or that the two could subsist in alliance or even in peace together, soon discovered their great mistake.

However ; the operation of mere human learning would never have brought about a revolution in the church, like that of Luther. It might have occasioned the removal of some scandals ; it might have exploded some

absurd practices; it might have roused the clergy to some sense of the shame, or at least of the danger, of ignorance; it might have purified the schools from much dogmatism and sophistry; and it might, too, have introduced very general infidelity among a generation whose ecclesiastical system was such, as scarcely to leave to the reflecting mind any other alternative than that of superstition or incredulity. But it would never have accomplished any extensive reformation: it would never have struck very deeply into the established evils, nor overthrown any large portion of them; or if it had, assuredly it would not have reconstructed on principles conservative of the religion, nor placed its reparations on an evangelical basis.

Erasmus was the representative of the most religious portion of the Humanists, and at the same time the bitter and persevering assailant of the most offensive abuses of the church. Yet how narrow were the limits of his opposition! how timid his approaches! and when the hour of danger really came, how faint his heart! nay, how miserable his apostacy! He discerned with keen perception the points of attack, and he skirmished about them with consummate skill; but no sooner did the assault become serious—no sooner did the towers at which he had shot his fiery shafts begin to totter, than he proved the weakness of his purpose. Yet, with all this, his previous exertions had produced incalculable good. He and his literary comrades had levelled innumerable obstacles and opened a broad path which could never again be closed. Only, while they rendered people dissatisfied with the actual condition of the church, they made no attempt to substitute anything better; they exposed error (as Luther once said of Erasmus), but they knew not how to teach truth.

Meanwhile the limits of information and intelligence

were already much enlarged, and were extending day by day. Fresh means of education were continually added to those already existing; and through God's good providence, an emperor of Germany received and communicated the impulse. In a Diet assembled at Worms in 1495, Maximilian passed an edict, by which the Electors were commanded to erect public schools and academies in their respective states. Several were consequently founded; and among the most eminent were the universities of Frankfort and Wittemberg. The former was established in 1506 by Joachim, elector of Brandenburg, the latter by Frederick of Saxony in 1502. It was from these new foundations that there was the fairest hope of some improved system of education. Free from inveterate hereditary prejudices—untrammelled by any ancestral reverence for time-consecrated methods, statutes, or axioms—open to the light and breath of day, and pervious to the current from without, they promised to be the nurseries of bolder and better principles, and to unfold wider prospects and brighter destinies to the generations to come.

Many names are mentioned of individuals distinguished in different branches of literature or science, in the beginning of the age of which we are treating—in medicine, in jurisprudence, in philosophy, philology, and classical erudition. Among them are Leonicens, Ruel, Linacer; Budæus, Schurffius, Cardan, Taurel, Zabarella, Scaliger, Copernicus; Mosellanus, Rhenanus, Pirkheimer; More, Pole, Hutten, Erasmus; Politian, Bembo, Vives, and Sadoletus; besides an obscurer host.* Their very numbers prove that the exercise of the intellect was no longer confined to the privileged or to the few; but that it extended at least as far as those classes, which are the

* See "Gerdesius Historia Evangelii Renovati," l. i. sec. xiii. xiv.

most powerful organs of public opinion. And thus there existed at that time a sufficient diffusion of intelligence to make it at least probable, that any bold appeal to the first principles of reason, of justice, of freedom, of religion, would not be pronounced in vain.

Amidst this general intellectual and moral activity, there was one science only which remained stationary—that of religion. In the time of Erasmus theology was precisely in the state in which Thomas Aquinas had left it. Every other department of knowledge was thrown open; the knowledge of the soul and of the means of saving it continued exactly where it was. The same theorems were delivered in the same form, and defended by the same laborious ingenuity; dialectics were still paramount, to the exclusion of all other mental discipline; history, even the history of the church, was superficially, if at all, treated; and the study of the Scriptures was altogether set at naught. Nor was it only the quality of this instruction that was unaltered; the number of those who sought it was scarcely larger than in former days. No thirst for knowledge, profane nor even sacred, inflamed the body of the monks or clergy; while all around them was changing, they alone were contented to remain just such as they were and had been, till the laity, so long accustomed to consider learning as peculiar to their spiritual instructors, were surprised to find themselves on a level with them, if not already advanced above them.

Yet the theology of the schools was purer than the observances of the church, and the instruction of its ministers less defective than their morals; the religion was incomparably more corrupt in its practice than in its theory; the discipline was far more widely perverted than the doctrine. We may be spared the pain of enumerating proofs of a degeneracy which has been eloquently

denounced by many Roman Catholic writers, from St. Bernard to Gerson, from Gerson to Erasmus, from Erasmus to Bossuet. And since in this field so many iniquities had been confessedly perpetrated for so many ages; since it is the nature of unrepressed abuse to grow and prosper; and since the most monstrous examples set by Rome had been among the most recent, it is fair to suppose that the externals of the church were at least as reprehensible at the period of which we are treating, as at any other, preceding or subsequent.

Yet her exalted ministers and directors were never more secure, never more complacent than then. Never did they contemplate with greater pride the strength and dignity of their Zion. A thousand objects filled their hearts with satisfaction. The inviolate majesty of the Pope; the wealth and splendour of a pompous hierarchy united in his support; the enormous opulence and unsuspected fidelity of the monastic orders; the terrible triumphs of the inquisition; the seeming devotion and unanimity of the people, presented an imposing spectacle of power, which dazzled and blinded them.

Again; the princes of Christendom were invariably educated in the bosom of the church, and all their earliest prejudices were instilled into them by the clergy—a solid ground of trust to all who know, how few are the minds which ever throw off those prejudices, and those few, how late and after how many conflicts! Their interests, too, were for the most part connected with those of Rome. Some of them not uncommonly had recourse to her mediation to assist them in extorting money from their own subjects; and there was not one who did not court her friendship and tremble at her menaces.

The universities, the supposed depositaries of the future fidelity of mankind, carried their devotion to the Pope to its utmost limit. With the single exception of Paris, they

acknowledged his infallibility. And even Paris was so far from nourishing any disposition to heterodoxy, that the Theological School had lately proclaimed before Parliament the panic of its bigotry: "There is an end of religion," said the Sorbonne, "if the study of Greek and Hebrew is permitted." The papal authorities had assuredly little to fear from that quarter. Besides, the church, notwithstanding the general ignorance of her ministers, was not ill provided with skilful disputants. And a large portion even of the real learning and genius of the age was engaged in her service, or living under her influence; so rich, indeed, was the fruit which fell from her wide-spreading branches, and so hospitable the roof which they offered, that the mere scholars of the age might well be tempted to repose and fatten beneath them; especially as the towers of the Inquisition were frowning over them at no great distance.

And besides these advantages, and scarcely less than these, there was the charm of antiquity, so venerable in the eyes of so many respectable persons; there was the sanctity of historical tradition—the Leos, the Gregorys and the Innocents; there were the councils and the canons; the fathers, the saints, the martyrs, the miracles; and that inherent human tendency to cling to things received, which shows itself especially in religious matters, and even in those perhaps most strongly when the religion is the farthest removed from purity.

All these sources of confidence the chiefs of the church surveyed from the chambers of their pride with inconsiderate exultation. And when they turned, moreover, to compare their present circumstances with those of preceding times, they found even additional motives for their great contentment. At no former period were the dominions of the church more ample in extent, more tranquil in subordination; her repose was disturbed by no ag-

gressions from without, by no discord from within; not a prince or state was in arms against her, but all combined to tender their general professions of honour and homage. Nor was there any sort of schism within: the Pope and his cardinals were in cordial co-operation; and the monastic bodies were united, if not in good will towards each other, or even in indiscriminate affection towards a partial master, yet in every outward mark of respect and obedience. No heresy of any threatening importance rent the vestment of St. Peter. That of the Bohemians had been stained by so much blood and defaced by so many mutual acts of crime and outrage, that the clamour of the Papists had succeeded in bringing it into very general contempt and repressing its progress. The sect of the Vaudois was obscure and harmless; and the disciples of Wiclif formed but an insignificant faction in a remote province of the Universal Empire. The Pragmatic Sanction, by which a degree of independence had been secured to another of those provinces, and which had subsisted since the reign of St. Louis, had been lately cancelled; and this was justly considered as an important triumph of the pontifical diplomacy.

The constitutional reformers of the church, a party scarcely less obnoxious to the See than its avowed enemies, were dispersed, and, as it might seem, disarmed. The formidable exertions of Constance and Basle had terminated in the defeat of the confederates; and Julius II. had achieved so recent a victory over a rebellious council, that there was no cause for any immediate apprehension from that quarter. It was now sufficiently clear, whatever might be the principles asserted or the schemes proposed, that the power of the Pope was *de facto* paramount in the church; and that he could repel or elude any legal attempts at self-reformation, even though they should be supported by the great majority of the faithful. And this

consideration, which ought to have occasioned the most serious anxiety to all honest adherents of the Catholic communion, was only a fresh cause of congratulation to the dominant party.

Besides all this, they pleaded, and with truth, that the See was not now more violent in its principles, nor in the execution of them more tyrannical, than in former periods of its history. Its pretensions were not more arrogant; its edicts were not more oppressive; its ceremonies were not more superstitious; its hand was not more rapacious—nay, it was not indisposed to allow a certain degree of tolerance, and to overlook occasional aberrations in doctrines merely speculative, provided this liberty did not in any way touch its prerogatives or revenues. In morals again, or at least in decency, a somewhat better example was presented to the people of Christ; at least, the monstrous crimes of Innocent and Alexander no longer polluted the court of Rome; nor were the faithful insulted by the exploits of a military pontiff. Those open outrages against the God of innocence, of mercy, and of peace, were no longer perpetrated in His name and with the pretence of His authority; those prodigies of wickedness had ceased, and might soon be forgotten. But it was not forgotten that the Christian world had endured them—that princes and nations had sat by and looked on them without revolt, without any public expression of horror—that no bolt had descended from above, nor had the wrath of the Lord been revealed by any visitation upon His church; this was not unobserved, and some who perceived it inferred that there were no limits to the forbearance on which the chiefs of the church might count, both from God and man.

But at that moment, at any rate, there could be no just cause for any such apprehensions. The court of Rome was then distinguished for its elegant magnificence, more,

perhaps, than for its vices. The Pope, at least, possessed many attractive qualities: generous and affable, of a humane temper and polished manners, and a refined and penetrating understanding, the patron of arts and letters, he was destined, as it seemed to those around him, to efface the foul memory of his predecessors, and to win, by his popular accomplishments and brilliant reputation, the affection of the whole Christian community.

In a word, in whichever direction those churchmen turned their interested and superficial view, they saw nothing that did not cheer their hearts and swell their confidence. And if any foreboding of evil ever thrust itself upon them; if the oracular denunciations of the Cardinal of St. Angelo,* the wisest of all their predecessors, were sometimes forced on their recollection, they found comfort in one of the customary modes of self-delusion—those forebodings so oft repeated have not yet been realised; those predictions after the lapse of so many years have not yet come to pass; the causes which have thwarted them will continue to thwart them still; and the counsels founded on their truth may be safely disregarded.

Such were the particular circumstances from which the directors of the Catholic church drew their partial conclusions, and they persisted accordingly, without any modification, in the ancient policy. But while they fixed their eyes on all these flattering details, they overlooked the broad and certain operation of general principles. They overlooked a multitude of ominous changes in the social system, or at least deemed their results so indirect and distant, as to require no precautionary measures. One of the most threatening among those changes, was the rapid progress of commercial intercourse, and of the industry, energy, and intelligence engaged in it. A class

* "History of the Church," chapter xxiv. vol. iii. p. 146, &c.

of men was thereby created, less accessible to priestly influence, less subservient to priestly authority, and at the same time active instruments in the general diffusion of information and independence. Colonies were established in regions, of which the very existence was of recent discovery. Civilisation received the impulse and advanced accordingly; and every step that it took was so much gained against the spiritual despotism.

The invention of the art of printing facilitated the spread of knowledge among all classes, and especially among the lower. Through the press, the minds of multitudes, hitherto placed beneath the reach of any literature, might be approached and enlightened. A sort of appeal might now be made, which before was impossible—a written and deliberate appeal to the natural sense and justice of the inferior orders. A new tribunal was thus erected for the trial of the ecclesiastical pretensions, and its decisions would be conclusive and irrevocable.

The popular indignation which had been manifested against the abuses of the church, during the earlier part of the fifteenth century, and especially manifested in Germany, was only smouldering under oppression, and was ever ready to break forth anew with greater violence and on still better reason. For not one of the grievances whence it proceeded had been redressed; the guilt of perfidy had been superadded to the other crimes of Rome; and even these, in an age of greater light, were become far more conspicuous. Nay, the surpassing enormities of some of the later popes, though they had escaped any public denunciation, were neither unknown, nor forgiven; but only treasured up with deep and thoughtful providence, till the hour of retribution should arrive. It was a great mistake to ascribe the silence of the nations during the last half century to their indifference, or to suppose that the feeling was extinguished, because the expression of it

was suspended. Partial interruption, or mere local occurrences, may divert the stream of just popular discontent for a season from its object; but it will commonly return with redoubled vehemence, whenever the progress of intelligence shall have given it not only greater intensity, but more commanding power.

The insurrection of the Bohemians, however contemptuously it might then be treated, had never been entirely subdued; and the Cup was still distributed among those rebels, in defiance of the apostolical edicts. Yet had this been otherwise, it would have lent the Papists no very valuable argument: for the Bohemians were ignorant and barbarous; there was no important principle involved in their schism; they contended by physical, not by moral or mental force; they had Zisca for their chief, not Luther. And as to the Vaudois, though they were silent and motionless in the depths of their magnificent solitudes, and neither gave nor meditated any disturbance to their oppressors, yet the massacre of a part had not converted the survivors; and they were prepared, as they presently proved, to lay hold of any hand of succour which might be stretched out to save them.

Even the principles of Constance and Basle, though baffled at the time, were not outrooted from the church. On the contrary, they had been carefully nourished in the secret conscience and aspirations of many learned ecclesiastics as well as laymen—men who sincerely loved their church, who did not disguise the most obvious of its defects, and who fondly believed that its purification could be effected by its own polluted hands. But there were others among its friends who gathered another and a juster lesson from that portion of its history. In the failure of those grand endeavours at a constitutional reformation they read a sad but certain augury, that the change, which could not be far distant, must proceed

from without ; that that, which the authorities would not grant as a blessing, would be inflicted as a curse ; and that the master who would not correct his ministers must be contented to lose his subjects.

These remarks apply perhaps more particularly to Switzerland and Germany, than to any other country—to the former, as the field in which the battles of constitutional reformation had been fought ; to the latter, as the land which had especially suffered by the fiscal exactions of the See, and which had proclaimed its “grievances” with the loudest voice. There were likewise political circumstances which distinguished these two nations from the rest of Europe. Switzerland was a confederacy of thirteen small states, each of which was in its form of government republican ; so that it offered means for the extension of general information, and the expression of public opinion, which were not to be found under any of the monarchical institutions of that age. According to the constitution of Germany, the states of the electors were exempt from the direct control of the emperor, and enjoyed at that moment a considerable degree of independence. The continual meetings and deliberations of this Diet tended to encourage a free spirit among its princes and nobles. They were at least not subject, in the regulation of important public matters, to the will of one. Whether the mere serfs were gainers by this is very questionable ; on them the power of a petty sovereign might fall with a nearer and more searching tyranny than any to which they would have been liable under the imperial government. But for the development of a growing intelligence, and the reception of new ideas among the higher and middle classes, this state of things was far more favourable than an absolute monarchy : because the progress of the current depended not on the caprice of an individual, who being a

despot would probably be a bigot, and who might arrest it by an edict; but having many channels open, should one or two be closed, it could not fail to find some other outlet, through which to pursue its course. Out of so many scarcely dependent princes, if only one should be found to aid the movement, it might presently acquire a force which no subsequent efforts would be able to repress. In the sort of revolution now in preparation the success of the first struggle would ensure, under the direction of a propitious Providence, a final triumph.

But a still more fruitful school for liberal principles in Germany was furnished by the popular constitution of the imperial cities. In these indeed there was a very wide scope for the expression of any prevailing discontent; and in many of them such violent local disputes had so long subsisted between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities,—for even the bishops and the magistrates had been in rude and frequent collision—as to have prepared and disciplined them to take part in any general outbreak against the whole system of spiritual domination. Among them, besides, the advantages of education were probably more diffused than in any other part of the empire.

These preliminary remarks, which are thus few and concise because the subject has been amply treated by other writers, are intended chiefly to show how, at the time when this history commences, the whole social system was in rapid progress and improvement, with the exception of one department only. In every direction reason was striding onwards to the overthrow of prejudice and ignorance—one branch alone repudiated every proposal of amelioration. And that one, was it a branch of little consideration in the universal economy? Was it a member of obscure rank and small pretensions? On the contrary, it was that which claimed an unlimited despotism over all the rest—a despotism of all others the most

searching, the most torturing, as it extended to every act of the hand, and every thought of the heart ; to the property, to the conscience, of the faithful ; to all that belonged to them in this world, and which, not content with this, had overleaped the gulph of death, and erected a new empire in the world of spirits, and ruled with the same rod and to the same ends the invisible generations of the departed.

The human mind was sufficiently advanced to perceive its yoke, and perceiving, to detest it ; and this was the first step towards liberty. Together with this sense of oppression and insult it began to form some notion of its own rights, and to feel some rising consciousness of its strength. This notion and feeling sharpened its impatience under the burden, and its desire to be free ; yet was it still but a general and vague desire, not directed by any fixed principles, nor to any specific objects. The materials were indeed ready, but they lay loosely scattered over a large surface ; the hand of the architect was wanting to combine and shape them. All things were prepared for some great change. All disinterested observers, gifted with any prescience, were persuaded that some such change was at hand. Public opinion was ripe for insurrection, and the system which rested upon it could not long subsist in defiance of it. Yet whence precisely the impulse would proceed—whether from within or without the sacred precincts, whether from a friendly or a hostile hand, whether from above or from below, from an ambitious prince or a discontented people ; against what point the first advances would be made, whether against the papal usurpations, or the grand hierarchical abuses, or the delinquencies of the inferior clergy, or against some particular corruption in doctrine, or relaxation in discipline, or excess in superstitious observance ;—all this was placed beyond the penetration of human sagacity,

and depended entirely on that great chain of providential concurrences which men call circumstances.

Among the doctrines professed by the Roman Catholic church at the beginning of the sixteenth century the following was one : That, after the guilt of sin has been forgiven by God, a temporal satisfaction was still due to his justice ; that this was imposed by the church under the name of penance ; that, when the penance thus imposed was so long as to exceed the limits of this life, the remainder must be performed in the intermediate state of purgatory : Again, that the Pope, through the possession of the keys, had the power, on certain conditions, of remitting this satisfaction and absolving the penitent, and such absolution was called an indulgence : Lastly, that the treasure, whence the indulgence derived its saving efficacy, was acquired by the supererogatory merits of Christ and the saints,* and was placed at the absolute disposal of Christ's Vicar upon earth.

We perceive at once how vast was the extent of the spiritual authority asserted by this doctrine ; let us now inquire with what sort of discretion it was exercised ? Something depended upon that. It was of some moment, what were the conditions on which this boon was dispensed—whether they were in consonance with any whisper of evangelical truth ; whether at least they had in view the improvement of morality and the mere earthly welfare of the faithful ; or whether they overlooked these objects in the nearer and narrower motive of ecclesiastical aggrandizement. It was at all times the profession of the church to require a preparatory declaration of repentance and confession. It was also its very early practice to impose certain works as the means of justification. Long

* According to the bull “Unigenitus” of Pope Clement VI. published in 1343.

before the entire degeneracy of Rome, in ages of comparative purity, the transgressor was taught that there were certain acts of piety, such as fasting, alms-giving, pilgrimage, by which he might obtain, through the mediation of the church, remission of the punishment due to his sins. There was something plausible in this theory, and flattering to the natural pride of man. And so long as the practice was exercised with moderation, it did not excite any great scandal in the world, and people did not turn to examine how far it was founded in Scripture.

But when this system of saving works, for such it was practically, was once established, it was no difficult matter to commute those works for gold, especially in times when the civil tribunals sanctioned the redemption of the most heinous offences. The temptation proved too strong for the virtue of the hierarchy, and the Father of the faithful was not ashamed to tax, for the immediate profit of the see, the transgressions of his children. In tracing the previous annals of the church,* we have observed the gradations of this corruption, and the steps by which a practice, in its origin innocent and perhaps useful, in its progress not indeed in accordance with an essential doctrine of Christianity, yet not opposed to the mere moral interests of society, descended at last into a direct and undisguised traffic in the sins and frailties of mankind. And more is not required here than to describe it, such as it existed, not only in its professed principles, but in its practical operation, at the epoch of which we are now treating.

The bull "Unigenitus" was published during the secession to Avignon, when avarice was beginning to supplant ambition in the councils of the Vatican. Thence-

* "History of the Church," chap. xxviii. vol. iii. pp. 320, 339, et seq.

forward the Popes aimed more boldly at the pecuniary contributions of the people, and all the spiritual resources at their disposal were brought to bear mainly upon that object. Among the rest, the doctrine of indulgences, as then modified, was obtruded under various forms upon the devotion of the faithful. Commissioners were officially appointed to dispense them through every quarter of Christendom. The defects in civil government co-operated with the vices of the ecclesiastical. The necessities of the princes of Europe, and even especially of Germany, not uncommonly engaged them as interested implements in the service of Rome, and made them zealous promoters of an imposture of which they shared the profits. Under such encouragement the papal pardons were advertised with their stated prices, and sold without fear or shame in the most public places.

Some murmurs, however, had been faintly raised against this practice, and even Saxony had been the scene of some confusion occasioned by it, towards the end of the fifteenth century. In 1491 Innocent VIII. had granted certain indulgences to Albert Duke of Saxony for the re-construction of the church of St. Mary at Freyburg, which had been burnt down some years before, on condition that a fourth part of the sum thus raised should be transmitted to Rome, to be there applied to the building of a Basilic to St. Peter. Some learned men remonstrated, and in the year following the Pope confirmed his grant. Still the dissatisfaction was not appeased; and even the Dominicans, seemingly through motives of monastic jealousy, joined in the outcry. Sermons were preached and public disputations held on the subject, and theses maintained by those monks, which gave great scandal at the Vatican. The dissension continued for four years; but at the end of that time Alexander VI., having previously issued a commission to examine the

question on the spot, published a bull (August 25, 1496) confirming the edict of his predecessor and imposing silence on the party which had resisted it.* But with this exercise of power he was contented. He inflicted no punishment; he required no retraction. And the result was, that the quarrel died away and was presently forgotten. For indeed it does not appear that either the princes or the people took any great interest in what they may possibly have regarded as a mere monastic squabble.

The practice continued, and grew more daring and obtrusive through long impunity. "Everywhere," said the moderate Erasmus,† "are reprieves from the executions of purgatory put up for sale; nor are they sold only, but forced upon those who refuse them." In 1514 Angelo Arcimboli, Pope's Protonotary and Referendary, was appointed High Commissioner for Indulgences in the Rhenish provinces, the Netherlands, and Burgundy. In 1515 another commission was issued for Bavaria, Austria, Westphalia, Holstein, Sweden, &c., in which one Tetzl was under-commissary. In 1516 the same Arcimboli gathered fresh spoils at Lubeck and throughout Denmark. Christopher di Forli, General of the Franciscans, received about the same time a commission for Switzerland, in the execution of which one Samson, a Milanese, acquired an ambiguous celebrity. A similar service had been previously performed for the Teutonic order by the above-mentioned Tetzl, in which he had levied large contributions. In short, those plun-

* "Nos scandalorum et seditionum materiam inter Christi fideles amputare et litium ex præmissis ortarum et quæ inde oriri in futurum possent occasionem præscindere volentes, litem prædictam et omnes alias . . . penitus et omnino extinguimus . . ." *Bulla Alexandri VI. ap. Seckend.*, l. i., s. 6., §. vi., *Addit.* ii.

† "Passim venditur purgatoriae carnificinae remissio; nec venditur solum, sed obtruditur nolentibus." *Pref. i. Epist. Corinth.*

derers were at that time spread over the face of Europe, and the people of Christ seemed to be delivered up as a prey into their hands.

The Emperor Maximilian made one feeble and partial attempt to restrain this iniquity. On March 7, 1515, he addressed an edict to the magistrates of Memmingen against certain very lucrative indulgences which some Dominicans of Augsburg were then preaching. He condemned the practice and prohibited their further publication.* But, immediately discovering that he had engaged in a struggle too difficult for his irresolute character, or tempted perhaps by some lures held out to his ruling passion, avarice, in the same year he revoked his edict, and on August 27, 1516, he published another in favour of the commission of Arcimboli.† Under such patronage the traffic grew in extent and audacity. The manner in which it was conducted became more indecent, the expressions of the preachers more extravagant, more entirely at variance with the first principles of morality, more insulting to the name of Christ. Yet the credulity of the vulgar and the connivance of the great seemed to provoke still additional insults and to promise a still longer impunity. The race which had submitted to purchase its salvation from the hand of Alexander VI., why should it ever awaken to any use of reason, or any sense of religion, or any respect for human virtue? The instrument of extortion which had been so powerful in the grasp of Innocent and Julius, why should it prove less effective when wielded by a popular pontiff? In the present high and palmy state of Rome, what was there to fear from perseverance in a profitable and unresisted practice? Such were the natural suggestions of a worldly

* “Gerdesius Monument. Antiquitatis,” &c. tom. i. num. viii.

† Ibidem.

policy, and doubtless they contributed to confirm the confidence of the see.

The confidence of the see was reflected upon the people in the rapacity of its prelates and the insolence of its emissaries. In 1516 Leo X. granted, among others, a commission of indulgences to Albert Archbishop of Mayence and Magdeburg, and primate of the German Empire. Its chief object was to enable him to defray the expenses of the pallium lately received from Rome; and some portion of the profits was, as usual, destined to the apostolical treasury. On publishing the bull, the primate issued some very particular instructions* to the commissioners whom he appointed to execute it. He exhorted the preachers to be diligent in representing to the people "the immense and inestimable fruits of those indulgences, to expound to them the principal passages of the bull, and to interpret and magnify them as largely as possible." He spoke of the Pope as the Vicar of God, and as possessing the same tribunal with Christ.† He dilated upon the various privileges conferred by the indulgence; of which the first mentioned was, "the plenary remission of all sins, than which no greater can be imagined, since, through it, man, a sinner and devoid of the grace of God, obtains perfect remission and grace." Then followed absolution from all censures; and from all offences, even those reserved to the apostolical see; and from all vows,‡ with three or four stated exceptions. Then,

* "Alberti Moguntini Summaria Instructio," &c. *Apud Gerdesium Monument. Antiq.* &c., No. ix. p. 83—113.

† "Papa Vicarius Dei, qui etiam cum Christo unum possidet tribunal." *Ib.* p. 90.

‡ In the diploma of indulgences signed by Bernard Samson or Simson (Bernæ, Nov. 15, 1518), "the relaxation of all oaths in all contracts, instruments, and obligations, except in the Pope's Court," is expressly mentioned among the virtues of the indulgence, as well as "absolution from every perjury." The passage is: "Ac quecumque tunc per eos

the liberation of souls from purgatory, through the contributions of the survivors. For the obtaining some of these graces contrition and confession were necessary, or at least a disposition afterwards to make such confession; while others were secured by the mere payment of the stipulated sum. The efficacy of the indulgence was likewise extended to all simoniacal offences, and other similar “irregularities;” to the retention, in certain cases, of property illicitly or dishonestly acquired; to uncanonical marriages and ordinations, and other ecclesiastical offences; and it was particularly inculcated that those, who had previously possessed themselves of similar pardons, were not for that reason to suppose that they might dispense with the present. From these few particulars it will be perceived, how wide a field for imposture and extortion was opened by the apostolical grant, and how willing was the prelate who had received it to enlarge the boundaries.

And if the commission of the Pope was thus amplified by the archbishop, the “Instructions” of the latter were received in the same spirit, and obeyed with even less discretion, by the emissaries to whom he addressed them. Among these the most zealous and distinguished was Tetzel—a name which would never have found a place in any history, had not that Providence, which sometimes deigns to employ the meanest instruments for the accomplishment of the mightiest purposes, placed it, though but for a moment, in the threshold of the Reformation.

emissa vota (ultramarino, ingressus religionis ac castitatis votis dumtaxat exceptis) in alia pietatis opera commutare: omnia insuper juramenta in quibusvis contractibus, instrumentis, et obligationibus (præterquam in foro cameræ) relaxare; et ab iisdem, necnon à quocunque perjurio absolvere valeat.” And then follows a clause, as if the matters had been of equal importance to religion, respecting the eating of eggs, butter, and cheese during Lent.—*Apud Gerdesium Mon. Antiq.*, No. vii. D. tom. i. part ii. p. 78.

John Tetzel was born in Misnia, on the banks of the Elbe. He received his education in a Dominican convent; and by the boldness of his manner and assertions, his restless diligence, his sonorous voice, his ignorance, his impudence, his want of moral principle, and his uncompromising devotion to what were called the interests, and what were really the scandals, of the church, he was qualified in those days for a certain degree of ecclesiastical promotion. He presently acquired some celebrity among the tools of the hierarchy; he was even raised to a considerable rank among the directors of the Inquisition; but it was in the sale of indulgences that his talents had been proved with most success. For this reason he was selected for the management of the present affair; nor was there any reason to believe that it would pass off less quietly or less profitably than so many which had gone before it.

The bull under which he acted was recommended at least by a specious pretence. The construction of the basilic of St. Peter, which had been commenced by Julius, was continued by Leo X.; and while the actual desolation of the resting-place of the apostles, and the profane exposure of their sacred relics, were impressed upon the commiseration of the vulgar,* the real sublimity of the design lent a colour of grandeur as well as piety to the present exaction, which might reconcile even the

* “Videlicet quoniam ecclesia beatorum Petri et Pauli, quæ est caput omnium ecclesiarum mundi, per piæ memoriæ Julium Papam usque ad fundamenta destructa sit, animo et intentione construendi aliam novam quæ prout decet parem in mundo habere non decet, et in ea varia maxime dictorum apostolorum, et innumerabilium martyrum, et aliorum sanctorum corpora sita sint; quæ corpora propter talem ruinam pluviis et grandinibus continuis dehonestantur—quibus attentis sine magnâ ignominia sanctitatis suæ et totius Christianæ reipublicæ non possit diutius truncus ille informis et pluvialis remanere, &c. &c.”—*Summaria Instructio*.

more enlightened. The popular character of the Pope, the more decorous deportment of his court, the peace and security which surrounded them, with other circumstances above mentioned, were all well suited to feed the corruptions of the spiritual despotism and the insolence of the menials who proclaimed and protected them.

The preachers of indulgences recommended their mission by much display of pomp and ceremony. When they approached any place of resort they sent before them a messenger to announce to the magistrate, "The grace of God and of the Holy Father is at your gates!" Immediately all prepared to receive them with honour. They made their entrance in long procession. First came the pontifical bull, placed on a cushion, or book bound in silk and gold. The commissary followed, supporting a large red cross; then a numerous assemblage of priests, and monks, and nuns,—of magistrates, schoolmasters, and scholars,—with a mixed concourse of men, women, and children, carrying flags and lighted tapers. The bells and organs resounded in the churches; and in the middle of that, appointed for the reception of the crowd, the red cross was planted, with the banner of the Pope attached to it. Then the preacher ascended the pulpit; and, if the language in which he recommended his barter exceeded the more cautious phraseology of the Vatican, the people knew no such distinction; but whatever proceeded from the minister was by them received as the oracular declaration of an infallible church.

Some of the expressions which were on this occasion employed by Tetzal have been diligently and, as I believe, faithfully recorded. He inculcated that the indulgence was the highest and most precious gift of God; that the indulgence-cross, with the affixed banner, was as powerful as the cross of Christ; that the Saviour had made over all power to the Pope, and would not resume

it till the last day; that, by means of that paper and seal, sins, however deliberately committed, however monstrous in themselves, would be forgiven, even to the violation (were such possible) of the body of the blessed Virgin; that no sooner did the money clink in the box than the souls for which it was offered flew up into heaven. We need not be surprised that these and such-like blasphemies were uttered by sub-commissioners and other subalterns, when we find in the instructions of their prelates directions at variance with the first axioms of morality, and indeed subversive of the most sacred principles of social intercourse. The doctrine of the indulgence, in itself corrupt, passed through two mediums before it reached the practice of the vulgar, and was thus distorted into a threefold deformity.

The general "Form of absolution" retailed by Tetzel, being an official document for which the church was in some degree responsible, was free from the most disgusting extravagances of his oral discourses; but the power assumed by it was sufficiently extensive. It was expressed as follows: *

* "Forma absolutionis plenariæ, præmissâ confessione.—*Apud Gerdesium*. tom. i., *Monumenta Antiquitatis*, No. vii. B. p. 74. There exists among these monuments a particular diploma of indulgences granted by Tetzel to one Tileman de Copenik, dated Berlin, October 5, 1517, giving absolution from homicide: "Thou hast explained to us that in slaughtering a swine thou didst unwittingly and unwillingly, and with infinite sorrow, kill thy boy, for which offence thou art most deeply afflicted. On which account, with a view to thy salvation, thou hast humbly requested of us the seasonable remedy of absolution; and we on our part, seeing that thou hast made composition according to thy means, do, by the apostolical authority here committed to us, mercifully absolve thee from homicide; and we do hereby declare thee absolved from the abovesaid homicide, and announce to all that thou art entirely liberated from all its consequences." *Ib.* p. 75. We should in justice observe that the contrition nominally required by the church is in this instance mentioned as having preceded the absolution.

“May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee, through the merits of His most holy passion. And I, by his authority and that of His blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and of our holy master the Pope, granted and committed to me in these parts, do absolve thee—first, from all ecclesiastical censures, howsoever incurred; next, from all sins, faults, and excesses hitherto committed by thee, howsoever enormous, even those reserved to the apostolical see, in as far as the keys of the Holy Mother Church extend; remitting by plenary indulgence all punishment due to thee for the aforesaid in purgatory. And I restore thee to the holy sacraments of the church, and to the unity of the faithful, and to the innocence and purity conferred on thee by baptism, so that the gates of punishment may be closed against thee at thy departure, and those of the joys of paradise be opened. Or, shouldst thou not presently die, let this grace remain in full force, and avail thee at the point of death. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—F. B. JOHANNES TETZEL, Sub-Commissarius manu propriâ scripsit.”

This pardon was preceded, at least nominally, by the form of confession; and there is doubtless some ambiguity in some of the expressions in which it was conveyed. But it was unquestionably intended to persuade the vulgar that the remission of all their sins and the certainty of everlasting happiness were secured to its possessors; nor can it be disputed that it conferred an entire absolution not only from all past, but also from all future sins. It is impossible with any shadow of reason to affix any other meaning to the concluding paragraph. Here then was temptation sufficient for the credulous sinner; and multitudes flocked accordingly to obtain on such easy terms the assurance of absolute spiritual impunity. Their motives might indeed

be various. The example of their priests and magistrates, the pomp of the ceremony, respect for an established usage, mere curiosity, or mere habit—these and a thousand other causes may have combined with superstition to attract them to the foot of the pontifical cross. Howbeit, the preacher, less regarding the motives than the numbers of his hearers, saw no cause to despair of his wonted harvest, or of the perpetual devotion of the people. He assumed the lofty tone which had hitherto overborne all resistance; he advanced the enormous pretensions which had so long subdued and paralysed the reason of mankind; and he had every promise before his eyes that the ordinary expedients would be followed by the long-accustomed success. Yet had Providence so ordered, that in this very moment of his pride and confidence the blow should descend upon himself and his church, and the age of disgrace and retribution at length commence.

CHAPTER II.

LUTHER BEFORE 1517.

Birth and family of Luther—his father, John Luther—his early education at Mansfeld, Magdeburg, Eisenach—his necessary mendicity—supported by Ursula Cotta—his progress there and at Erfurth—his degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts—his musical talents—the strength of his religious feeling—he discovers a Latin Bible and applies to it—his sickness, and consolation by an aged priest—violent death of his friend Alexis—in spite of his father's reluctance he embraces the monastic life—his subsequent account of this to his father—various drudgeries imposed on him—zeal with which he applies to study and meditation—ecclesiastical history, Greek, Hebrew, Dialectics—rigid in his observances—his inward conflicts or temptations become more violent—described by himself—founded in the fear of damnation—various quotations—he is noticed and consoled by the Vicar-General Staupitz—his spiritual obligations to Staupitz, who gives him a Bible and predicts his future usefulness—doctrine of justification by faith—admitted to the priesthood, and in the following year raised to a professorship at Wittenberg—lectures first on Aristotle—is then made Bachelor in Divinity, and lectures on the Bible with great success—his journey to Rome furnishes much valuable experience—Milan, Bologna, Rome—general infidelity of the Italians and of many of the Roman clergy—his disgust and its lasting effect—becomes Biblical Doctor in Divinity, and inculcates the efficacy and necessity of faith against the merit of works—his letter to George Spenlein—distinction between the Law and the Gospel—difference with Erasmus—his letters to Spalatin and Lanzus on that subject—he preaches before George of Saxony and gives offence—his doctrine carries him into direct opposition to Aristotle, and he expels him from Wittenberg—he publishes the “German Theology”—he puts forth theses on Grace, &c., in 1516, and the same amplified to 95 in 1517—and sends them to his friends, challenging disputation.—Such was Luther in 1517.

THE name of Tetzel introduces that of Luther. Through one of the vilest instruments of ecclesiastical rapacity we come to the mention of the man who not only

reformed the church, but regenerated the religion. And, since it is essential to the right understanding of the character of the Reformation that even the more minute circumstances of its origin should be placed in a clear light; and since this cannot be, unless we shall first form a just estimate of the principles and motives which influenced the chief agent in the mighty work; it will be proper in this place to notice what is important in the early life of the reformer, and to represent him such as he was, when he first emerged from academical obscurity and attracted the general attention of the Christian world.

Martin Luther was descended from a family of very moderate condition, which had long dwelt in the domains of the Counts of Mansfeld, in Thuringia. "I am the son of a peasant," he used to say; "my father, my grandfather, and my great-grandfather, were honest peasants." His father, John Luther, an upright and industrious man, went soon after his marriage to reside at Eisleben, a small town in the part of Saxony contiguous. And it was there that, on the night of November 10th, 1483, a child was born to him: it was on the eve of St. Martin: the boy was baptized on the following day and named Martin accordingly.

John Luther had improved a naturally strong understanding by such application to books as was possible to one of so little leisure, and in those days. Margaret, his wife, was a devout and good woman, and was looked upon by her honest neighbours as a pattern of all virtue.* Thus was neither branch of Martin's education neglected. In his earliest years he was led to the knowledge and fear of God, and received, too, such intellectual culture as was provided by the spot where he lived.

His parents again removed to Mansfeld soon after his

* Melancthon, *vita Lutheri*.

birth, where they continued in great poverty. "My father was a woodcutter," says Luther, "and my mother has often carried the wood on her back to earn the means of bringing us children up." Their condition, however, was in due time somewhat improved. A connexion with the iron-mines worked at Mansfeld raised them above the lowest drudgery, and John, through the general respect acquired by his probity and good sense, was admitted into the local magistracy. This elevation advanced him to the level of the society which, humble as he was, he had ever courted—that of the better instructed among his townsmen,—and enabled him to assemble round his table the little scholars and ecclesiastics of the district.

Martin's first instructor was one George Emilius, the pedagogue of the place, from whom he received the foundation of his religious education, in the Catechism, the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, with some other prayers and hymns; and also the rudiments of Latin. But these acquirements were obtained through much severity and amid many stripes. On one occasion, as he himself relates, he was flogged by his master fifteen times in the same day. His domestic discipline was of the same character. His father administered with conscientious rigour what was so long considered as the only instrument of moral or intellectual cultivation; and even his mother engaged in the system with so much zeal as to draw blood by her chastisement. Some portion of these inordinate inflictions may, doubtless, be ascribed to the warm and resolute temper of the boy. And it was in the school of poverty and pain that he was formed for the hardships, and stripes, and struggles of a life of warfare.

When he had exhausted the literary resources of Mansfeld, as he had given some promise of proficiency, he was sent at the age of fourteen to a consider-

able school at Magdeburg. He remained there for one year only; and history delights to record that one Andreas Proles, a provincial of the Augustinians, was there employed at that very moment in preaching with great zeal against the abuses of the church, and urging the necessity of an immediate and vital reformation.

The severity of Luther's education did not cease with the days of his childhood, or his removal from the parental roof and the rude hands of Emilius. He was withdrawn from Magdeburg through the inability of his parents to maintain him there, and sent to Eisenach, the native place of his mother, where he had many relatives, and where he might hope to find some friends. But there, too, he was driven to a somewhat humiliating method of providing for his subsistence. He went about, with the companions of his poverty, singing hymns from door to door, and receiving in return the slightest contributions of charity. It was not that any idea of degradation or disgrace was then attached, or is now attached, to that last resource of indigent scholars. "Let no one," (said Luther in after-life) "presume to despise in my presence the poor companions who go about singing from door to door and crying 'Panem propter Deum,'—'For the love of God, bread!' You know that the Psalmist says princes and kings have sung: and I also, I have been a poor mendicant; I have received bread at the house-door, particularly at Eisenach, my beloved city." But the means of existence thus procured were at best precarious; and the occupation of mendicancy, however necessitated and even authorised, was calculated to depress and chill the rising energies of the soul.

It does not appear that Luther was fortunate in this avocation: he left Magdeburg through positive want, and it seemed likely that his residence at Eisenach would be of scarcely longer duration. It was becoming a ques-

tion whether he must not abandon his last hopes of improvement and advancement, and return to the smoke of his paternal forges. The crisis was at hand which should decide whether his condition was to depend on the exertions of his mind or on the strength of his arm—whether the aspirations of an ardent imagination were to have their free course in the broad fields of learning, or to be shut up for ever in the mines of Mansfeld. Providence was not wanting to its future instrument in this perplexity. One day, as Luther was returning from his labours, after various repulses, disappointed and disheartened, he attracted the attention of the wife of one Conrad Cotta (or John Schweickard), a substantial citizen of Eisenach. She was struck by the sweetness of his voice and the seeming earnestness of his devotion : she took pity on him, and, her husband approving her compassion, the young student became thenceforward their perpetual guest—in this respect more fortunate than the most formidable among the future adversaries of his doctrine, Ignatius Loyola ; whom the same necessity compelled to persist for a much longer time and at a much later period of life in the same practice.

From this time, as his anxieties were removed, his talents opened and enlarged. He read too, in the seasonable charity of the pious Ursula, a special interposition of his heavenly protector ; and it became to him a never-failing motive for gratitude and confidence. The gratitude which he felt towards heaven he testified on earth by his conduct to his benefactors ; and some years afterwards, when the poor mendicant was exalted to dignity at Wittemberg, a son of Cotta went to study at that university, and received in his turn the hospitality of his father's guest.

Luther continued his studies in the Franciscan School at Eisenach, for four years. He displayed extraordinary

powers, especially, as Melancthon relates, that of eloquence; and presently surpassed all his fellows in all their exercises and compositions, both in prose and verse. Having thus tasted the sweetness of literature, he was eager to drink a deeper draught—his mind was inflamed by nature with a thirst for learning; it was still further excited by his early triumphs; and he panted for more extensive means of intellectual advancement and distinction.

Erfurth was at that time the most distinguished university in Germany; and there, in the year 1501, Luther entered into the studies of manhood. “My father maintained me there with much love and faithfulness, and supported me by the sweat of his brow:” and assuredly all the volumes of the history of mankind contain no record of a parent’s manual toil being recompensed by so glorious a harvest as that which sprang from the persevering industry of the miner of Mansfeld. Every drop that fell from that brow was converted by a watchful Providence to the furtherance of its purposes, and made the means of fertilizing the mind, which It had ordained to change the predominant principles of the Christian world.

Yet through what strange circumstances was this purpose brought to its accomplishment! When Luther arrived at Erfurth, he found the students occupied by the lectures of an eminent dialectician named Jodocus. Immediately his talents were turned to acquire the necessary proficiency in the philosophy of the schools. The name of Aristotle was proposed as the object of his deepest reverence. The system was represented as the best, or rather the only, discipline for his reason. The works of the great scholastics of former ages were recommended as the very oracles of piety and learning, and their arguments impressed as the most perfect effort of the intel-

lectual power of man. It was easy to inculcate all this on a young and susceptible mind. And as Luther undertook nothing that he touched with coldness or feebleness, so he made a progress unusually rapid in those vain studies, and presently acquired the reputation of an acute and skilful disputant. Yet even this was necessary, that he might afterwards have the better right to despise that with which he was thoroughly conversant; and also, that, in his frequent conflicts with scholastic adversaries, he might not be perplexed by the glittering of weapons, of which with his own arm he had proved the frailness.

He was admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1503, and to that of Master of Arts, or Doctor in Philosophy, in 1505. Meanwhile, it would appear, that, in obedience to his father's wishes rather than his own inclination, he was beginning to direct his attention to the study of the law. He had made, besides, considerable proficiency in several branches of literature: he had read with increasing pleasure and assiduity the productions of the best Latin authors, not excepting the poets. He possessed a strong natural taste for music, which he valued and cultivated, so as to play with skill upon the lute and flute, and understand the principles of the science. And if the variety of his talents and the elegance of some of his accomplishments might seem to indispose him for the severe and exclusive study of jurisprudence, assuredly it was beyond man's sagacity to divine, in the expert dialectician of Erfurth, the character which was destined to overthrow the despotism of Rome, and break the shackles which had so long fettered the understanding of man.

Yet was there much more passing, even at that time, in the bosom of the student, than appeared to common observers. Even then he was inwardly convinced of his entire dependence upon God, and sought Him with per-

petual prayer. Even then he was tremblingly anxious to secure his salvation ; and engaged in deep and frequent meditations on the judgments and wrath of God, and on the vengeance which He had sometimes taken upon the sins of men. It was in this mood that, as he was one day searching the library at Erfurth, among other works which curiosity led him to examine, he casually opened the Bible. He had not so much as seen this book before ; his knowledge of it was confined to such extracts as were used in the church service, and which he piously supposed to contain its substance and essence. He was then twenty years of age ; he had received the most perfect education which the church permitted to her faithful sons, and he had eagerly availed himself of all its advantages : he was familiar with the writings of Scotus and Aquinas, of Occam and Buonaventura ; but the foundation on which his faith was built, the sacred oracles of promise and regeneration had never been disclosed to him, had never entered in any way into the course of his instruction.

The Bible was in Latin, the only language with which he was yet acquainted ; and he devoured it with avidity. He was astonished at the mass of knowledge contained in it ; he was delighted by its simple narratives ; he admired its majestic precepts ; he felt the beauty of its holiness ; and he turned all that he admired and felt to his profit. He returned to his treasure and unfolded it again and again, and expressed a humble wish that some day a similar possession might be vouchsafed to him. Those feelings, that holy prayer, were the beginning of the reformation. That book contained, though he knew it not, the fate of his future life. All the toils, and comforts, and conflicts, and triumphs of his anxious existence lay concealed among those leaves. Had he regarded them with indifference ; had he passed them

coldly by, like his brother-students, or like the monks and ministers of his church, he might have lived as ignorant and died as obscure as they. But it was the eagerness with which he seized that book, and the tenacity with which he clung to it, which marked him for the child of faith, the instrument of a spiritual regeneration.

About this time a dangerous sickness befel him, occasioned by the severity of his application: he feared the supposed approach of death; he feared still more the judgment which was to follow. In this tribulation he laid bare his secret terrors to an aged and holy priest, whose consolations sank deep into his breast; for not only did he assure the sufferer, with a confidence almost prophetic, of his recovery and of the comforts which he would live to dispense to mankind, but at the same time taught him, "That the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth," and that he lays on them betimes his holy cross, wherein, "through resignation is much knowledge." The knowledge of the cross was thus, for the first time, presented to his feelings; and it appeared as a blessed peace-maker in the troubles which disturbed his spirit. Thenceforward he had some refuge in his rudest agitations; he had some light to guide him in the darkest commotions of his soul. But we must not suppose that his religious principles had yet assumed any definite character, or rested on any very certain foundation. He feared the wrath of God; he was desirous, above all earthly things, to be saved; he had even sought for knowledge in his Bible; but he was not yet assured of the essential means of salvation.

About two years afterwards his destiny was decided by an extraordinary incident. He was deprived of an intimate friend by a sudden and probably a violent death. The name of the latter was Alexis: some relate

that he was killed by lightning in the very presence of Luther; others, that he died by assassination, while a thunderbolt fell at the same moment before the feet of the survivor; others, that the thunderbolt descended some time afterwards, as it were in repetition of the previous warning, while Luther was reflecting on the fate of his associate. These particulars are of little consequence; but the result of the visitation is certain and important. Luther trembled. He began to inquire whither his own soul might be hurried away, if the same untimely fate should overtake him. The terrors which had affected him before, now returned with redoubled violence and took possession of his whole spirit; and he was at once engrossed by one single consideration, the means of best securing his eternal welfare.

Need we wonder that, in such a moment, with a soul so troubled, at so early an age, with a temperament so warm and a mind so earnest, so deeply imbued too with the learning and principles of the church, he should decide on seizing that, which was reputed the nearest path to Paradise, and embracing the monastic life? He interpreted the voice of the thunder to be a call from heaven. It was not through any previous desire or inclination that he took his resolution, still less through any hope of worldly comfort. But being compassed about by the fear and agony of a sudden death (they are his own expressions) he made a forced and necessary vow, and proceeded at once, before any change could be wrought in his feelings, to accomplish it. His father, as he well knew, was strongly opposed to such a proceeding. Repeated examples had taught him that the monastery was not always the abode either of piety or happiness. Besides he destined his son to an honourable and wealthy marriage, and trusted to see him eminent in the profession of the law. Accordingly Martin concealed from

him his design: and having called his friends together, on the 17th of August, 1505, to a social meeting, he entertained them with gaiety and music during the evening, and the same night, in spite of their astonishment and remonstrances, entered into the Augustinian convent at Erfurth.

Almost sixteen years afterwards Luther composed his book against monastic vows, and dedicated it to his father. In the preface, after mentioning some of the above particulars, he continues: "Your indignation against me was for some time implacable, and it was in vain that your friends represented to you, that it was an acceptable sacrifice to God to offer that, which was best and dearest to yourself. At length you were appeased, and submitted your will to God, but without renouncing your anxiety about me. For I remember but too well, when in no angry mood you were conversing with me; and when I pleaded my vocation through terror from heaven, my freedom from any private wish or sensual motive, and the vow, which under the fear of sudden death I had vowed: I wish (you said) that all this may not be illusion and trickery!* Those words penetrated and sank into my very soul, as if God had spoken by your mouth. But I hardened my heart, as well as I was able, against you and your expressions. There was another too which you spoke to me. When I with a son's audacity reproved you for the indignation which

* "Memini enim, nimis præsentē memoria, cum jam placatus mecum loquereris, et ego de cælo et terroribus me vocatum assererem—neque enim libens et cupiens fiebam monachus, multo minus vero ventris gratia, sed terrore et agone mortis subitæ circumvallatus vovi coactum et necessarium votum: Utinam, aiebas, non sit illusio et præstigium! Id verbi, quasi Deus per os tuum sonaret, penetravit et insedit in intimis meis. Sed obfirmabam ego cor, quantum potui, adversus te et verbum tuum"—*Pref. in Libr. De votis Monasticis. Ex Erema. Nov. 21, 1521.*

you had shown, suddenly you retorted on me and rebuked me so seasonably and suitably, that in my whole life I never heard any word of man which struck me more powerfully. And have you not likewise heard, you replied, something about the obedience due to parents? But I was secure in my own righteousness, and heard you as a man only, and as such entirely despised you—for from my heart I could not despise that speech.”*

Respecting the motives by which Luther was urged to this hasty proceeding, it is impossible to imagine any other than an overpowering sense of religious necessity. He thought to find his salvation most certainly in that which he had been taught to consider the holiest condition of humanity; and he imagined that his devotion to God would be more pure and perfect, as he withdrew farther from the temptations of the world. As to the effect upon his prospects and character, to mere common sagacity his retirement would appear, as it appeared to his father, to threaten him at least with obscurity, if not with positive bondage to the most trivial ceremonies and profligate corruptions of the church. Yet was it turned by an overruling Providence to the very opposite consequence. That very initiation into the mysteries of monachism, which revealed to his senses the real character of the system, cleared away the delusions inculcated by a bad education, and prepared him, when the season for action should arrive, to become a more indignant and destructive antagonist. While the spiritual struggles, which were encouraged by that seclusion, gradually brought him, as we shall presently mention, through much prayer and many inward agitations, to

* *Ibidem.* “Verum ego securus in justitia mea te velut hominem audiavi et fortiter contempsi; nam ex animo id verbi contemnere non potui.”

the full conviction of the truth of that great doctrine, which furnished the deepest motive for his future exertions and the surest pledge of his constancy.

No sooner was he entered, than he engaged in the business of this new life with the whole ardour of his character. At first, indeed, he was subjected, without any respect for his high academical reputation, to all the degrading circumstances of monastic drudgery. He performed the lowest offices in the establishment. The hands of Luther closed and unclosed the gates, wound up the clock, and cleansed the receptacles of dust and filth. In the intervals of these labours he was sent forth on his former errand of mendicancy, bearing the bag of the monastery, and begging bread from street to street, and from door to door. And sometimes, when he would have employed those intervals in study or devotion, he was roused by the impatient clamours of his brethren, urging him to abstain from that, which could in no respect benefit the community; to resume his sack, and sally forth in pursuit of more substantial objects: "It is not by study, but by begging bread, corn, eggs, fish, meat, and money, that you can do good to the convent."* All this was necessary, not only that he might learn, through the protracted rigour of his education, those hard lessons of self-denial which he was to practise in after life; but also that he might lay up, through his own personal experience, a closer knowledge of monastic worldliness, attended with a keener feeling of disgust, than he could have imbibed from all the persecutions of Reuchlin, or all the sarcasms of Erasmus.

As soon, however, as he obtained some relaxation from these menial duties, he betook himself with all his

* "Cum sacco per civitatem; mit betteln und nicht mit studiren reichert man die Klöster."

soul to reading and meditation. The discharge of the offices imposed on him never diverted his mind from its deep purposes. The contagion of ignorance, dulness and perhaps vice, polluting all around him, was not only not dangerous to Luther, it even served to point out to him more strongly what he ought to shun. In his studies, the works, which attracted his most serious though not his earliest attention, were those of Augustine. There he found matter for his reflections and aliment for his piety. There his enthusiasm was animated and his eloquence enriched. And as in early life he had a deference almost reverential for established authority, even the authority of the Bishop of Hippo, the patriarch of his own order, may have possessed more weight with him, than he was willing to acknowledge or believe.

Among the more recent doctors of the church, he was chiefly conversant with Occam, Pierre d'Ailly and Gerson. And if, as we may hence infer with reason, a favourite subject of his historical researches was the Council of Constance, he must have found in those records much that would wean his mind from unlimited devotion to an absolute papacy. He must have imbibed at least some constitutional principles of ecclesiastical government. And though that despotic assembly did indeed consecrate the practice of persecution by an act of detestable barbarity, and though Luther may at that hour have approved that act, yet the doctrines of the martyr must have suggested some hints to his intellectual independence; and his natural humanity must have received some shock even from the judicial sufferings of an earnest, though mistaken, Christian.

One of the brothers, named John Lange, possessed considerable knowledge both of Greek and Hebrew, languages of which Luther was yet entirely ignorant. He

did not lose this fortunate occasion for improvement. It was to such purposes that he applied the leisure, which the routine of academical occupation might not so easily have afforded him; and in the seclusion of his cell he amassed the means of future distinction and usefulness, and laid the foundation especially of the greatest of all his works, the translation of the Bible.

Among other matters he acquired still further perfection in the learning of the schools. In his public lectures he excited admiration by the subtlety with which he traced the inextricable mazes of dialectics, and the ease with which he solved the most abstruse questions. It seemed as if his talents had been expressly formed for the illustration of the science of the day, for the defence and ornament of the system with which it was connected. And he was doubtless hailed as the rising light and hope of the apostolical church by all those who did not observe, that he treated those scholastic studies as no better than accessories; that that which he really sought was not the repute of ability, but the substance of piety; and that his most serious labours were directed to the right interpretation of holy writ, and the subordination of his whole soul to the truth which he might find therein.

At the same time no one kept the observances of the cloister with such ascetic severity as Luther. In all the exercises of discipline, whether of reading and disputation, of fasting, or of prayer, he was pre-eminent before all the brothers. He was by nature extremely temperate both in food and drink. "I have observed him," says Melancthon, "for four following days, when he was in perfect health, neither to eat nor to drink anything." This power of abstinence he exerted, while abstinence was a part of duty, to a pernicious excess. His devotion to the church was of the same character with his faith in

Christ. He had yet no suspicion that the rites of the former were in any way at variance with the precepts of the gospel. He faithfully believed that, by performance of the prescribed works, he was advancing towards his everlasting object. Hence his strict obedience to the rules of his order—not only through the sense of what was due to his vow and profession; not only through his veneration for the apostolical church; but through these blended with the conviction, that both the one and the other were identified with religion. “If ever a monk (as he wrote some time afterwards to Duke George of Saxony) obtained admission into heaven by his monkish merits, I should have deserved that success.” That was the end at which he aimed; and he pursued it with so much zeal, as even to endanger his life by the austerity of his discipline.

Yet all those talents, and studies, and occupations, directed as they were to one engrossing object, were not sufficient to satisfy the cravings of his soul. Something was yet wanting to his tranquillity, and he was the more troubled by that want, because he had no very clear conception of its nature. Those inward conflicts, which had disturbed his earlier years, were redoubled in the solitude of the cloister. Now that the gate of this world was closed upon him, there was less to break the storm which raged within; so that it ravaged where it rose, and grew into a violence almost delirious. He considered those spiritual convulsions as temptations; and oft reflecting on them in after life, he described their fury and the infirmity to which they reduced him: “Ah! if St. Paul were now alive, I would willingly learn from himself the nature of the temptation which he suffered. It was not the sting of the flesh, as the papists dream. Oh! no; there was no sin there to tear in pieces the conscience. It was something higher than the despair caused by

sin; it was rather the temptation of which the Psalmist speaks: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' As if he had said, thou art mine enemy without a cause! and as in Job—'I am nevertheless just and innocent.' Jerome and other fathers felt no such temptations. They experienced none but childish ones—those of the flesh—though even those have their sting. Augustine and Ambrose also had temptations, and trembled before the sword; but this was nothing compared to the angel of Satan, who buffets with his fists. If I live a little longer, I shall write a book on those temptations, without which no man can comprehend the holy Scriptures, or be acquainted with the fear and love of God."

"I was sick in the infirmary. The most cruel temptations exhausted and martyred my body, so that I could scarcely breathe or pant. There was none who consoled me. All those, to whom I complained, answered—I know not. Then I said to myself—Am I then the only one who ought to be thus broken-hearted? Oh! I saw nothing but spectres and horrible figures. . . . But it is now ten years since God by his beloved angels gave me consolation—that of contending and writing. . . ." It is not for those, who are engaged in the hourly occupations of the world, to pass any hasty judgment on emotions such as these. They may have been the angel's hand, by which the Lord is pleased to trouble the waters, before He sends down his healing grace upon them. They may have been no more than the convulsions of an energetic and ungoverned spirit, cast upon its own resources, misled by vicious education, violent in its struggles after truth, yet deeming truth itself not an end, but only the means of eternal salvation. Luther was painfully impressed with the consciousness of his own unworthiness, of his own sinfulness. The severity of his monastic

habits, his watchings, his fastings and his solitude increased his susceptibility of strong and irregular impressions. Hence, perhaps, those wild agitations, which in a character of less vigour might have ended in madness. But Luther was far removed from that danger. In the machinery of his ample mind the weight of substantial reason preponderated. More than once he bent before his passions, as we shall observe in tracing the progress of his life; but he presently recovered his attitude, and straightway proceeded, through a rough and tossing sea indeed, but sound and upright on his holy destination.

In the preface to his works, written the year before his death, he entered more particularly into the nature of those early “Temptations;” and his language proves how entirely they were founded in a religious feeling, and how intense that feeling was: “From the time that I studied the Epistles of St. Paul, I was seized with a strange desire to ascertain his meaning in the Epistle to the Romans. One only expression arrested me: ‘Therein is the righteousness (justice) of God revealed.’* I hated that expression ‘Justitia Dei,’ because, according to the interpretation of all the Doctors, I had learnt to understand by it that active justice, by which God is just and punishes the unjust and sinners. I who led the blameless life of a monk, and nevertheless had the restless conscience of a sinner, without being able to assure myself what satisfaction I could make to God, I did not love, no, let me at once say, I hated that just God, the avenger of sin. I was indignant against him. I uttered loud murmurs, if indeed it was not disguised blasphemy. I said: Is it not enough, then, that miserable sinners,

* Rom. i. 17. *Justitia Dei revelatur in illo. Δικαιοσύνη γὰρ Θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ (τῷ Εὐαγγελίῳ) ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν καθὼς γέγραπται· Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.*

already eternally lost through original sin, have been overwhelmed by so many calamities through the law of the Decalogue; must God add affliction to affliction by his gospel? and by his gospel menace us with his justice and his vengeance? Into such violence I broke out, in the trouble of my conscience, and always returned to beat importunately at that same passage of St. Paul, burning with thirst to penetrate his meaning.

“At length, as I meditated day and night on those words, God took compassion on me. I understood that the justice of God is that by which the just lives, through the gift of God, that is to say, faith, and that the passage signifies: the gospel reveals the justice of God, that passive justice by which the God of mercy justifies us through faith. Then I found myself altogether regenerate (*prorsus renatum*), and seemed to be entering through open gates into Paradise. The whole appearance of Scripture seemed new to me. And as much detestation as I had formerly felt for those words, ‘*Justitia Dei*,’ with so much love did they now inspire me, as the sweetest of all expressions. . . .” The “regeneration” here described did not indeed take place till the year 1519, and therefore belongs to a later period of this history. But the above passage so well illustrates the earlier conflicts of Luther’s monastic life, and points out so clearly the port in which his troubles ended, that it is scarcely anticipation to produce it here.

The profound melancholy of the young brother had not escaped the observation of the Vicar-general of the Order. His name was John Staupitz; and his elevation to that high office proves that personal merit was not always overlooked, even in the last degeneracy of the Roman church. He was indeed of noble descent; but he was far more illustrious through the power of his eloquence, the extent of his learning, the uprightness of his

character, and the purity of his life. He possessed the esteem of Frederic the Elector of Saxony, and had been his chief agent in his greatest work, the foundation of the University of Wittenberg. He was the first who filled the theological chair in that establishment, and he inculcated the study of the Scriptures, as the richest source, not only of inward holiness, but also of religious knowledge; and this was no trifling praise in that age. Neither had he closed his eyes against the corruption of his church, nor even refrained from expressing his sense of it. But he had done so with the mildness of an affectionate son, desirous to remove the blemishes, of which he perceived indeed only a part, and that not the most important part. He would have raised the character and condition of the clergy; he would have improved their morality and enlightened their ignorance. But he looked no deeper; nor had he the courage to proclaim even his partial views in that firm voice, which, in a good cause, will ever command attention, though it may not secure success.

In his visits to inspect the monastery at Erfurth, Staupitz found occasions to seek the society of Luther. The young student, who had been the most distinguished in the pursuits of the university, was now in the cloister the most rigid devotee, the most entirely dedicated to God. Besides, the spiritual conflicts which wasted him argued the earnestness of his character; and the nature of those conflicts, so unintelligible to his merely worldly or merely learned brothers, was immediately penetrated by the evangelical sympathy of Staupitz. The Vicar-general condescended to question the monk, to instruct him, to reprove him, to console him. He taught him that there is not any man free from sin; that there is no man who can stand by his works or his vows; that his entire dependence must at last be on the mercy of God; that this

mercy must be sought in the blood and before the cross of Christ; that it is vain, and worse than vain, to speculate on the schemes and attributes of God; that we know the Father only as He is revealed to us in the Son.

More than ten years afterwards (May 30, 1518) Luther sent to Staupitz a copy of his "Resolutions," accompanied by the following expressions:—"I remember, reverend father, that, in the course of those most delightful and salutary conversations of yours, with which the Lord Jesus is wont (solet) wonderfully to console me, mention was once made of the word 'Repentance.' And while I was pitying the condition of many consciences, and censuring those executioners of conscience who through innumerable and intolerable precepts deliver what they call a mode of confession, your reply came to me as it were a voice from heaven: 'No repentance is true, except that which begins in the love of righteousness and of God; and that is, in fact, the first step in repentance which they deem its conclusion and consummation.' This speech of yours pierced me like the sharp arrow of a strong man. . . . On these principles, I ventured to consider those in error who ascribed so much to works of penitence, as to leave us scarcely any other penitence, except certain frigid satisfactions and a most laborious confession. And I believe them to have been misled by the Latin term; since to perform penitence (*pœnitentiam agere*) rather expresses action than any change of feeling, and by no means satisfies the sense of the Greek *μετανοεῖν*. While my meditations were urging me on warmly in this train, behold, the trumpets of indulgences and the cornets of remissions began anew to sound and clang in our ears. . . . Being unable openly to resist the fury of these brawlers, I determined to dissent from them with mo-

desty, and to throw doubt upon their dogmas. Hence my ‘Disputations;’ and for this reason it is that now, in a luckless hour, I stand forth in public—I who have ever loved retirement.”

It appears from the above quotation how deep an impression the doctrine of Staupitz had produced on his mind, and how constantly it had furnished the subject of his meditations. Another counsel he received from his superior, which was no less ardently embraced, and with consequences which were beyond the foresight, and perhaps beyond the wishes, of him who gave it: “Let your principal occupation be the study of the Scriptures.” Along with this precept Staupitz presented the means of observing it. Luther did not possess a Bible. Two books only did he carry with him into his monastery, and they were both profane and both poetical—the works of Plautus and of Virgil. The latter, like the music of his lute, may have frequently interposed to soften with consoling harmony the tribulation of his spirit. The fruits of the former may be sometimes discerned in the caustic coarseness of his polemical writings. These were the only companions which followed him from the world into his seclusion. From the moment that he had discovered the Latin bible in the university library, he had longed for that possession. In the convent, that to which he had access was chained in its place. Staupitz supplied his want, and made him master of the treasure which, of all on earth, he most coveted.

On one of these occasions of spiritual consolation the Vicar-general ventured to address to him some expressions which were afterwards dignified with the character of prophecy: “Thou knowest not, Martin, how useful to thee is this temptation, how useful and how necessary! For it is not without design that God thus proves thee. Thou wilt see that He will employ thy ministry for

the accomplishment of mighty purposes." This prediction, proceeding from so high a quarter, was not lost upon the mind of the pupil; and, under Providence, it may have aided in effecting its own fulfilment. Nor was it uttered inconsiderately. Staupitz had distinguished the powerful genius of Luther: he had remarked the assiduity of his application, the austerity of his habits, the sincerity of his intentions, the rigour of his principles, the extent and variety of his acquirements. He perceived too that to such a character, at such a crisis, *some* important part was destined. But it was beyond the sagacity of man to divine what that part would be; or indeed to imagine any loftier position than that of an enlightened defender, perhaps a fond and partial reformer, or, it might be, an accomplished and honoured prelate, a faithful, yet not servile, champion of the apostolical church.

During a dangerous illness which attacked him in the second year of his residence in the convent, Luther was frequently visited by an aged monk, to whom he confided all his doubts and fears. That good father represented to him the efficacy of faith, and especially recalled him to that article of his creed which says, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." And this he interpreted not generally—that some will be forgiven, that David and Peter will be pardoned—for that the devils themselves believe; but in the sense that every one is commanded to believe in the forgiveness of his own sins through faith. And he confirmed this interpretation by some reasonings of St. Bernard in his sermon on the Annunciation. These words, Luther used to say,* not only confirmed but explained the doctrine which St. Paul repeats and inculcates so often: "We are justified by

* Melancthon, Vita Lutheri.

faith." After this consoling conversation he rejected all the other various explanations which he had read of that passage. Step by step, and by a diligent comparison of the words and examples both of the prophets and apostles, he acquired clearer information on that question, especially as he animated his pursuit by daily and fervent prayer.

Meanwhile Providence opened another career to him. Staupitz possessed an influence at the university of Wittenberg which he had well deserved by his services; and he exerted it to procure the appointment of Luther to one of the professorships. He was admitted to the priesthood on May 2, 1507; and it appears, from a letter which he addressed on that occasion, and which is his earliest extant letter, to John Braun,* the Vicar of Eisenach, that he entered into the ministry with a strong sense of his own unworthiness, and of gratitude to God for having vouchsafed to call him. And, as one of the surest measures of the purity of religious feeling is the exercise of a benevolent piety towards man, Luther proved the sincerity of his profession by seeking in that solemnity an occasion to be reconciled with his father. His father accepted the overture and forgave his disobedience.

It was in the following year that Luther was invited to Wittenberg. The period of three years, which he had passed in his monastery, was not lost either to the cultivation of his intellect or the discipline of his soul. Towards a conviction of the truth of that great doctrine, on which so large a part of his subsequent work was built, he had made greater progress in that seclusion than the business of the world would probably have permitted. They were besides those years of life during

* Dated "ex Cœnobio nostro Erfurdensi, April, 22, 1507." The object of this letter was to invite his friend to be present at his ordination.

which the impressions made, be they good or evil, are the most lasting. He had acquired too in the venerable Staupitz a friend and a patron, who placed him, at the age of twenty-five, in a position suited for the display of his talents and the further development of his character. And he brought back with him, on his return to more active life, a personal knowledge of the real value of those vows, professions and observances, which were still represented as the holiest solemnities of the church.

It was a strange dispensation that the subjects on which he was appointed first to lecture were the dialectics and physics of Aristotle. Even then he was dissatisfied with that task, and expressed, in a letter of March, 1509, to the same Braun, his preference for scriptural theology.* Howbeit, he applied his powers to illustrate the theme imposed on him, and with so much success as to excite the admiration of his hearers. Still he was confined by the ordinary fetters; and, whatsoever flashes may have proceeded from his individual talents, the system was the same which had so long bewildered the reason of man.

In the same month he obtained the degree of bachelor in divinity; and then it was that a wider and more congenial field was open to him. He was then expected to lecture upon the Bible. Every day he assembled round him a curious and delighted audience. His first discourses were on the Psalms; thence he proceeded to the Epistle to the Romans. Herein were matters which

* His expressions were, "Sum itaque nunc, jubente vel permittente Deo, Wittembergæ. Quod si statum meum nosse desideres, bene habeo gratia Dei, nisi quod violentum est studium, maximè philosophiæ, quam ego ab initio libentissime mutarim theologia, ea inquam theologia quæ nucleum nucis et medullam tritici et medullam ossium scrutatur. Sed Deus est Deus. Homo sæpe, imo semper, fallitur in suo judicio."

touched the most sensitive chord of his faith. To this subject he brought not only the eloquence of a schoolman, but the feeling of a Christian. The troubles which had so lately harrowed his soul had revealed to him new views of scriptural truth, and given him new powers of exposition. His reason was excited by his fervour, and that which he felt he inspired. He occupied at the same time one of the pulpits in Wittemberg; his preaching was of the same character with his lectures and commanded no less wonder. He numbered among his admirers many of the most learned of his countrymen; one of whom, Martin Polichius of Meilrichstadt, or Mellerstadt, a celebrated doctor in law and physic, was wont to presage his approaching distinction. "That monk" (he used to say) "will throw all the doctors into confusion; he will propound a new doctrine and reform the whole church of Rome. For he is devoted to the study of the prophets and apostles, and rests on the word of Jesus Christ. This is his support, and it is so strong that neither philosophers and sophists, nor Scotists, Albertists and Thomists, have any power to subvert it."*

He had been thus occupied for about three years,† when the affairs of his order compelled him to make a journey to Rome. And here again was another form of discipline, by which Providence prepared him for his office. It is

* *Mathesius Convers. i. de Lutheri.*—*Melancthon, Vit. Luth. s. vi.*—*Seckendorf, l. i. s. viii. § 8.*

† I follow the authority of Melancthon. The date of Luther's journey is indeed variously fixed in 1510, 1511, 1512; but as he completed it within the year, as his promotion to the doctorate presently followed his return, and as that event certainly took place in 1512, the most probable of the three dates seems to be that assigned by Melancthon, namely 1511. But I need scarcely say that it is a question of no real importance.

easy to imagine the feelings with which he would approach the holy city. Even his classical tastes and studies would create in him some enthusiasm; but those were already giving place to a far deeper passion and more engrossing pursuit, and these too no less closely connected with Rome. Among the tombs of the apostles and the monuments of so many saints, in the heart of the church of Christ and in the presence of Christ's delegate upon earth, he doubtless expected to warm his devotion and purify his faith. Zealous and earnest in his evangelical profession, he extended his ardent reverence to that visible representation of the gospel truth established among men. Nothing in his yet clouded eyes was so sacred as the church of Rome. His devotion to it, and to the chief who presided over it, partook of the vehemence of bigotry. He was then so wild a papist as to find all the apologies and eulogies of the system faint and cold,* compared with the eternal majesty of the subject. He set out on his journey assured that he should gather in the metropolis of Christendom some valuable fruits of spiritual instruction.

Instruction indeed he did gather; and he was wont in later life to say, "Not for a hundred thousand florins would I part with the remembrance of that journey.† I

* "Sciat (Lector) me fuisse aliquando monachum et papistam insanissimum, cum istam causam aggressus sum, ita ebrium, ita submersum in dogmatibus papæ, ut paratissimus fuerim omnes, si potuissem, occidere, aut occidentibus cooperari et consentire, si papæ vel una syllaba obedientiam detractarent. Tantus eram Saulus, ut sunt adhuc multi; non eram enim ita glacies and frigus ipsum in defendendo papatu, sicut fuit Eccius et sui similes, qui mihi serius propter suum ventrem papam defendere videbantur, quam quod serio rem agerent. Immo ridere mihi papam adhuc hodie videntur, velut epicuræi. Ego serio rem agebam, ut qui diem extremum horribiliter timui, et tamen salvus fieri ex intimis medullis cupiebam"—*Prefat. Lutheri in Opera Anno 1545.*

† "Wie er sich an seinem Tische off that vernehmen lassen, er wollte

might then have felt some apprehension that I had done injustice to the Pope!" It is not that he could have been ignorant of the leading features of the more recent history of the Vatican, nor that the crimes and scandals of popes and cardinals were altogether veiled even from a German monk; but he may have thought them exaggerated, or he may have condemned them only as individual transgressions, not detracting from the holiness of the church. At any rate, he had heard only distant rumours, which conveyed no strong impression of the reality. He was attached to his church with the ardour which animated all his feelings; he revered it as he revered his faith, as he hoped for his salvation; and he trusted to find in a nearer inspection only fresh cause for love and veneration.

He descended the Alps to Milan, and in the neighbourhood of that city was entertained in a monastery of marble. As he proceeded he found everywhere the same magnificence. He was astonished at the sumptuous hospitality which loaded the tables of the servants of God. All this was new and surprising to the humble professor in the frugal academy of Wittemberg. But, when he discovered besides, that the monks of Italy broke without scruple their Friday's fast, he was so moved as to venture on one occasion a remonstrance, for which, as some report, he nearly atoned with his life.

His eyes began to open. He traversed on foot the burning plains of Lombardy. The climate disordered him without, and his inward reflections suggested only dissatisfaction and disgust. He arrived at Bologna dangerously sick; and his only consolation was to repeat,

nicht tausend gülden dafür nehmen, denn er hette Rom gesehen." Mathesius.—Predig von der Historien dess Heren d. M. Luther's—a work containing some interesting particulars, especially concerning the early life of Luther.

as he was wont, the apostle's words, "The just shall live by faith." He recovered, and, after passing through Florence, and toiling under an oppressive sun through the long tract of the Apennines, at length he reached his destination. No sooner had he entered the convent of his order, situated near the Porta del Popolo, than he fell on his knees and lifted up his hands to heaven and cried, "Hail, revered Rome, sanctified by the blessed martyrs, and by their blood which has been shed into thy bosom!" And under the influence of this enthusiasm he presently hastened to the holy places, he visited all their precincts, he listened to all the legends by which they are consecrated, and all that he saw and heard he believed.

The general voice of history assures us, that the more enlightened classes of the Italian people, not excepting a considerable portion of the clergy, were at that time deeply infected with infidelity. There is nothing improbable in this. Without assuming any error in the doctrines of the church, we need not hesitate to assert that among its rites there were several offensive to any but the grossest understanding; among its ceremonies, many which insulted the simplicity of the religion of the gospel; among the tales and traditions inculcated on the belief of the faithful, many which presumed an unlimited credulity; and these observances and superstitions were carefully put forward and presented to the people as the substance and essence of their faith. The amazing pretensions of the see must have shocked the piety of every intelligent mind. The abuses, which had then so overgrown the whole ecclesiastical system as to form indeed its most conspicuous part, must have disgusted every one not connected with it by the endearing tie of interest. Above all, the vices which stained indi-

vidual members of the hierarchy, the abominations daily perpetrated by popes and prelates in the name of Christ, shocked that natural feeling which teaches, that no religion can be from heaven unless it operate for the moral improvement of mankind.

These and other similar considerations combined to plant a secret contempt for the church among all who saw her close and in all her deformity, and who had courage to reflect on what they saw. Only their reflections led them too far. They never thought of reforming and restoring; they never paused to distinguish the evil from the good; but they hurried at once to the conclusion, that a system externally so offensive to reason and so subversive of morality could not possibly have any foundation in truth. Yet was even this precipitance in some measure excused by the policy of the church; for it had been her perpetual object to identify all religion with herself; to preclude any form of belief unconnected with her own system, and even with the abuses of that system. She had locked up the Scriptures, and substituted herself in their place. So that to those, whose veneration was secretly revolted by the near view of her deformities, she afforded no alternative, she left no refuge, short of absolute infidelity.

If the crimes of Alexander VI. had covered the see with shame and staggered even its most chivalrous supporters, the military excesses of Julius II. were scarcely less offensive in the chief of the religion of peace. The father of the faithful, the servant of the servants of God, took pleasure in the tumult of the camp, in the pomp and circumstance of war, and directed with his own hand and voice the onset of battle. A pontiff reeking with the blood of his brother Christians, the head of the church exulting in the spoils of his brother church-

men, presented a contrast between duty and practice somewhat too glaring even for an age born and educated in bad principles.

Again: the manners and the morals of the prince were communicated to the court. Thence they descended to the prelates and dignitaries of inferior rank; and thence to the officiating ministers of the Italian churches. And, as these scandals produced their deadliest effect where they were most notorious, it was at Rome that infidelity had taken the deepest root, and concealed itself with the least decency. Yet were there none more faithful and bigoted to the church than some of those who disbelieved the religion—those, I mean, who found their personal profit in maintaining the established enormity, and reaped either wealth, or luxury, or dignity, through the predominance of the superstition which they despised.

Among such men as these—men whose Italian vivacity heightened the effect of their levity, and whose subtile wits were sharpened by practised art—the serious, devout, evangelical Saxon spent fourteen days of astonishment and mortification. It was too short a time to allow him any clear insight into the real meaning of the scenes which surrounded him—yet long enough to disclose in its entire deformity the wickedness and hypocrisy of his Roman brethren. His own pious practices gave occasion only to their raillery. He heard blasphemies uttered without reproof in their private conversations. The public services of the church were performed with a perfunctory and contemptuous haste, and not least among them the sacrifice of the mass. Once, when he celebrated that sacrament, he perceived that seven were already finished ere he had completed one; while the priests were exhorting him—“Hurry on, hurry on; restore the

Son to his mother without more delay." He heard from others, that there were some priests who, instead of the authorised words of consecration, repeated the following: "Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt remain; Wine thou art, and wine thou shalt remain."* Nor was it only by the degeneracy of the system and the indecencies of the ministers that he was thus deeply shocked; he remarked besides, both in the one and the other, an entire disregard for that great doctrine of justification, which had cost him so many struggles, and which he now almost considered as the corner-stone of the Christian edifice.

After transacting the business on which he was sent, he turned his back for ever upon the apostolical city. And as in olden times the evangelical spirit of Wiclif had been warmed by a personal view of the vices of the court of Avignon; so did Luther carry away with him from the infected air of Rome, not indeed any malevolent feeling towards the church of his forefathers, not any passionate determination to assail it, but only a deep conviction of its degeneracy and imperfection as an instrument of religious truth, and a fervent hope that Providence might be pleased to amend it in due season and restore its original purity.

Not long after his return from Rome, on October 9, 1512, on the pressing solicitation of Staupitz, he took the degree of doctor in divinity. He showed some reluctance to assume a dignity to which he attached the highest spiritual importance. He deemed it an office intended not for the display of theological knowledge or

* "Dicentibus sacrificis: *passa, passa*—i. e. *propera, perge, et remitte matri filium, nec diu detine*. Audivit quoque alios referentes verba sacrificorum nonnullorum, quomodo panem et calicem consecrare solent, videlicet, *Panis es, et panis manebis. Vinum es, et vinum manebis.*" Hottinger, Hist. Eccles. pars. v. p. 847.

acuteness, but for the diffusion of Christian holiness. "I will say nothing of my own incapacity" (thus he wrote a month before to the Augustinians of Erfurth), "lest, under the show of humility, I should give admission to pride and vanity. But I beseech you first, and before all things, that you will be pleased to commend me to God by your common vows, that His favour and blessing may be with me. By the law of love you owe me this." His scruples gave way to the authority of his vicar, and the degree was conferred according to the accustomed forms by the dean of the theological faculty, Andrew Bodenstein of Carlostadt, a name not without distinction in the early annals of the Reformation, and to which we shall recur in due season. It was on this occasion too that the first intercourse took place between Luther and his prince. Frederick paid the expenses of his degree.

Luther was promoted to the doctorate best suited to his feelings and talents—for there were two descriptions of doctors, those of the Bible and those of the Sentences. He was made a biblical doctor, and the oath which he took obliged him "to defend with all his might the gospel truth." No more delightful duty could have been imposed on him, and he betook himself to discharge it accordingly. His earliest reflections had taught him that the true foundations of all theology were placed in holy writ. His maturer convictions assured him that justification by faith was the peculiar doctrine of the gospel. He had acquired during the last four or five years a respectable acquaintance both with the Greek and Hebrew languages. Thus was he qualified to inculcate his opinions with power and authority, and to restore by the forcible interpretation of scripture a tenet which was practically lost to the church. The strength of his reasonings and the perspicuity of his remarks gave promise of a new and brighter era in the science of

theology, and awakened the interest and excited the hopes of all who still loved their religion.

Before all things he contended with the doctrine which, if not nakedly promulgated by churchmen from the chair and pulpit, was embodied in the practice of the church, and inculcated virtually along with that practice, that man could procure the forgiveness of sins by his own merits, and stand justified in the presence of God by his works alone. In opposition to this error, he set forth in fervent expressions the efficacy of faith, the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God, the original corruption of our nature, the gratuitous remission of sin, the necessity of grace unto salvation. He carried his hearers away from the vulgar motives which were commonly recommended to them, and conducted them into the very depths of Christianity, as revealed by its great apostle. The persuasions, which he had reached through so much fear and anguish himself, he strove to impress, as was his obvious duty, upon those whom he was appointed to instruct.

Of Luther's writings earlier than the year 1517 very few remains are extant. But among them is one, a letter to an Augustinian monk in Memmingen, named George Spenlein, which bears upon this subject. It is dated April 7, 1516, and contains the following expressions:—"But I am anxious for information about the condition of your soul; whether it is at length weary of its own proper righteousness, and is learning to respire and confide in the righteousness of Christ. For in this age many are inflamed by the temptation of presumption, and those especially, who are striving with all their might to become righteous and good; but they know nothing of the righteousness of God, which is given to us profusely and gratuitously in Christ, and seek it in themselves by the operation of good works, in such manner

as to trust that they can stand before God, as it were adorned by their virtues and merits—a thing which cannot possibly be. You were once involved in that opinion, in that error—so in like manner was I; but I am now still battling against it, and have not yet entirely vanquished it.”

Connected, if not identical, with this position was the grand distinction which Luther laboured to establish between the law and the gospel—the law as the parent of works; the gospel as the everlasting fountain of faith—the former being in all respects subordinate and subject to the latter. This point he treated at some length in a letter to Spalatin, dated October 19, 1516; which is curious on another account, as he expressed in it, so early in life, a bold dissent from a scriptural interpretation published by no less an authority than Erasmus: “The points which displease me in Erasmus, a man of the greatest erudition, are these; first, that, in interpreting the apostle, he understands the expression, righteousness, of works, or of the law, or one’s own righteousness (for the apostle uses all these expressions), to mean those ceremonial and figurative observances; next, that he does not suppose the apostle to speak distinctly of original sin in his fifth chapter to the Romans. . . I have no hesitation in dissenting from Erasmus in this matter, because I as much prefer Augustine to Jerome in scriptural interpretation as he prefers Jerome to Augustine in every respect. Not that I have been brought to this approbation of Augustine by mere professional prejudice, for he had not the slightest favour with me till I fell in with his works; but because I perceive Jerome tending as if studiously to historical meanings, and, what is still more strange, giving sounder interpretations of scripture when he is writing on other subjects, as in his epistles, than when he treats on that professedly. By no means

then is the righteousness of the law, or of works, to be understood of ceremonies only, but also of all the works of the Decalogue. For these works, when performed without faith in Christ, may indeed make a *Fabricius* or a *Regulus*, and men of great integrity *as men*, but they have no more the flavour of righteousness than the sorb-apple has of the fig. For it is not, as Aristotle thinks, that we become righteous by acting righteously, but rather the converse is true; by being righteous (if I may so express it) we act righteously. First the person must be changed, then the works. Abel must be accepted first, then his gifts.”*

We may here observe that the above distinction, in a somewhat different sense, became afterwards a very valuable weapon in the hands of the Reformers, when they brought themselves to understand, by the law, the worldly sensual system of a pharisaical church—by the gospel, that purer system which they were constructing for themselves. But Luther, at that early period, though neither blind nor indifferent to the disorders of the church, had formed no project for its overthrow, nor even for its reformation; nor had he yet acquired any definite views as to the nature or origin of its very corruptions.

A few months later (March 1, 1517) he wrote to John Langus a letter confirming his former expressions respecting the theology of Erasmus: “I am reading our countryman Erasmus, and day by day my inclination for him decreases. I do indeed like this in him, that he attacks monks as well as priests not only learnedly but

* “*Quæ quando fiunt extra fidem Xⁱ, etiamsi faciant Fabricios, Regulos, et plane integerrimos viros apud hominem, non tamen plus sapiunt justitiam, quam sorba ficum. Non enim, ut Aristoteles putat, justa agendo efficimur justi, ni simulatorie; sed justi (si sic dixerim) siendo et essendo operamur justa. Prius necesse est personam esse mutatam, deinde opera; prior placet Abel quam munera ejus.*”

perseveringly, and finds them guilty of inveterate and slothful ignorance. But I fear that he is not advancing the cause of Christ or grace of God, a subject on which he is altogether uninformed; human considerations prevail more with him than divine. . . . The present times are full of danger, and I perceive that a man has not the true knowledge of Christianity because he knows Greek and Hebrew; since even St. Jerome with his five languages was not a match for St. Augustine, who knew but one; though Erasmus is of a far different opinion. . . . However, I altogether conceal this my judgment of him, lest I should strengthen the band of his enemies. Peradventure the Lord will give him understanding in His own good time.”*

During the summer of 1517 George Barbatus, Duke of Saxony, who was the head of the Albertine or younger branch of the Saxon family, and held certain states independent of his cousin the Elector, commissioned Staupitz to send some distinguished divine to preach before him at Dresden. Staupitz selected Luther, as a young man of the highest promise and pretensions. He went and preached. The subject which he chose was that nearest to his heart—faith, election, predestination. But as he reasoned on these matters, and amplified his argument, and descended at some length into the merits of the doctrine, the prince began to tremble for the interests

* “*Video quod non ideo quis sit Christianum verè sapiens, quia Græcus sit et Hebræus, quando et beatus Hieronymus quinque linguis monoglosson Augustinum non adæquavit, licet Erasmo aliter sit longè visum. Sed aliud est judicium ejus, qui arbitrio hominis nonnihil tribuit, aliud ejus qui præter gratiam nihil novit.*” On the 18th of the January following Luther repeated the same judgment of Erasmus, the same wish to conceal it and the same reason for that wish, in a letter to Spalatin. “*Multi sunt omni studio occasionem quærentes ad calumnia bonis literis; secretum itaque sit tibi quod dixi, &c.* . . .”

of morality. He denounced the dogma as full of most dangerous consequences, directly tending to the practice of evil, and thenceforward bore no friendly disposition towards the person of the preacher. Luther never afterwards returned to Dresden.* Whether the sermon in question did indeed contain any extreme doctrine, or any unguarded expressions, such as to justify the duke's suspicion, or whether that proceeded only from his own ignorant misapprehension of the theologian's positions, it is not perhaps for the historian to affirm. But it was certainly an unfortunate occurrence, that the future reformer of the church should create an enemy at that very crisis in a prince who was neither without power, nor talents, nor energy, whose dominions were close at hand, and who was so nearly allied to his own sovereign.

The great religious principles by which Luther was guided, and which lent him courage to think independently, and to express what he dared to think, gradually produced an entire revolution in his theological system. It placed him in direct opposition to the method of the schools and the authority of Aristotle. His exertions to restore to the world the vital doctrine of Christianity brought him into perpetual collision with the positions of the Thomists and Scotists, and all the established apparatus of religious instruction. In the books of the schoolmen, which for a while he searched with the deepest respect, he could discover no glimmering of truth, nor even any honest pursuit after truth. In the matter which they propounded, and the ends at which they aimed, he perceived indeed some practical conclusions, some moral admonitions, some philosophical deduc-

* Fabric. Orig. Saxon. Lib. vii. p. 859. Ap. Seckendorf. Lib. I. § 8.

tions; but he found nothing that warmed the heart and awakened it to holiness—nothing that breathed humility and self-distrust—nothing that pointed to the cross of Christ as the single certain instrument of salvation. Even the manner by which they proceeded to their conclusions, though within the reach of his talents, was at variance with the direct and onward tendency of his simple and earnest mind. And thus it proved that, as he examined their productions with more and more attention, so his reverence gave place to suspicion, and his suspicion advanced step by step into positive detestation and contempt.

This change was effected while he was yet the mere professor of Wittemberg. On the 8th of February, 1516, he addressed a letter to his friend John Langus, containing the following strong expressions:—"Aristotle, Porphyry, the theologians of the Sentences—these are the fruitless studies of the age. There is nothing I so burn for, as to strip bare that actor who has deluded the church in that truly Grecian mask of his, and to expose his ignominy to all mankind. I have in my hands some little Commentaries that I have written on the First Book of his Physics, in which I intend to act again the part of Aristæus towards that Proteus of mine, that most crafty deceiver and deluder of the human mind: so much so indeed, that if Aristotle had not been flesh I should not have blushed to assert that he was the very devil.* It is the severest part of my affliction that I am compelled to see young men of excellent talents, naturally qualified for good pursuits, passing their lives and wasting their

* "Nihil ita ardet animus, quàm histrionem illum, qui tam verè Græcâ larvâ Ecclesiam lusit, multis revelare, ignominiamque ejus cunctis ostendere. . . . Meum istum Protea, illusorem vaferrimum ingeniorum, ita ut, nisi caro fuisset Aristoteles, verè diabolum eum fuisse non puderet asserere. . . ."

labours in such farces. . . .” Somewhat more than a year afterwards, on May 18, 1517, he wrote on the same subject in a more sanguine mood: “God is working among us. Our theology and St. Augustine proceed prosperously, and by the help of God are triumphant in our university. Aristotle is gradually losing ground, and will presently be consigned to irretrievable ruin. The lectures on the Sentences are ill frequented, while all the hearers are attracted to the schools of biblical theology.”

Thus it seems that even in so short a space his exertions had produced their effect. In the place of “the mountebank of Greece,” and all his followers, of Jerome and others who had inculcated the merit of works, Luther had already substituted the writings of Augustine, and established his favourite doctrine. The inefficacy of the will of man, and his gratuitous justification through faith by grace alone, was become the basis of his whole system of theological instruction. He was confident through his entire persuasion that such alone was the religion of the gospel and the path of safety. And in this consisted, in his opinion, the real dignity and value of the chair of Wittenberg, that it gave him authority to communicate to others the convictions which absorbed his own mind, and which were essential, as he ardently believed, to the eternal salvation of his disciples.

In 1516 he republished a spiritual work called ‘The German Theology.’* In the Preface he scrupled not to pronounce it the most profitable book he had ever read, except the Bible and Augustine; while he deplored the long neglect and contempt of the word of God. In respect to certain charges brought against the divines of Wittenberg, that they preferred new ideas, and against

* Luther’s Werke, xiv. s. 206. ap. Marheinecke, t. ii. p. 44.

German theology in general, that it inclined to mysticism, "Be it so," he continued : " I thank God that I both understand and find my God in the German tongue, as we have yet been unable to find Him either in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew. God grant that this little book may become better known ; so shall we have proof that the German theologians are, without comparison, the best."

For the still further diffusion of his doctrine, Luther induced one of his hearers, a professor of Aristotle's Physics, named Bernard of Feldkirchen, publicly to put forth certain theses containing it. Among them were the following : " He who has not received the grace of God cannot keep God's commandments, nor prepare himself, wholly or in part, to receive grace, but remains necessarily under sin. Without divine grace the will of man is not free, but enslaved and willing to remain enslaved. Jesus Christ our strength, our righteousness, is the only discerners and judge of our deserts. Since all things are possible, as Christ assures us, to him that believeth, it is superstitious to seek for other help, either in man's will or anything else deemed holy."

The disputation took place in 1516. Luther presided, and this little academical debate produced some sensation among the German theologians. It may have been for that reason, that in the following year he drew up a much ampler exposition of his doctrines, that relating to the human will especially, which he expressed in ninety-five theses. It is not necessary to enumerate them here. We find it advanced, among other similar positions,—That man, being a corrupt tree, can only will and do what is evil ;—that the will cannot by its own operation effect good ;—that it is not free, but captive ;—that the infallible and sole preparation for grace is the election and everlasting predestination of God ;—that on man's part there is nothing that precedes grace, only helplessness and

disobedience ;—that there is no moral virtue without sin ;—that we are not the masters of our actions, but their slaves ;—that there is no reasoning or syllogism suited to the things of God ;—that Aristotle is to theology as darkness to light ;—that he who is destitute of the grace of God sins incessantly ;—that the law of God and the will of man are two opposites, which cannot come together without the grace of God ;—that the law makes sin to abound by irritating and repelling the will, while the grace of God makes righteousness to abound by Jesus Christ, who leads us to love the law ;—that those are under the curse who do the works of the law, and those blessed who do the works of the grace of God.

In order to give notoriety to these propositions, Luther sent copies of them both to Erfurth and to Nuremberg. The former he addressed to his brother monk and correspondent John Langus ; and in a letter, dated Sept. 4, 1517, declared his willingness to defend them in public disputation before the university. He was not ignorant how “ paradoxical and even kakodoxical ” they were likely to appear to the monks and theologians of Erfurth ; notwithstanding, he was desirous to support them, and did not tremble at the probable array of his antagonists. But the men of Erfurth discreetly declined the challenge, and contented themselves with a private expression of their displeasure.

At Nuremberg he recommended them to Christopher Scheurl, the town-clerk of the city, in a letter dated five days later. And through Scheurl he requested that they might be further communicated to the most distinguished professor at Ingolstadt, in Bavaria, John Meyer of Eck. “ Present them,” he said, “ to my very learned and ingenious friend Eck, that I may know what he thinks of them.” This divine, to whom so prominent a part was destined in the impending controversies, appears not to

have taken any public notice of Luther's theses. They occasioned no argument or disputation either at Ingolstadt or Nuremberg. For, in fact, they related to matters which, however great their importance, were of a nature for the most part speculative; they touched in no respect the abuses of the church. They were addressed to the erudition or the piety of the few; they contained no appeal to the common feelings of mankind, no allusion to any of those practical topics of general interest which were within the grasp of every mind, and which secretly agitated the whole bosom of the Christian community.

Such was Luther—such in character, talents, occupations, principles—in the beginning of the year 1517. Full of genius, energy, sincerity and zeal; devoted to his church, as the visible representative of his religion; thirsting for salutary truth, and fearless in his search of it; impressed with one great doctrine as the very essence of Christianity, and daily and earnestly employed in diffusing it, and thus already committed in opposition to the established method of theological education; he seemed destined to work some important change in the ecclesiastical system—to relieve it from some doctrinal abuses—to revive in it some portion of evangelical holiness—to inspire into its dry and corrupted members some breath of the spirit of Christ; and, by thus conciliating the offended sense and piety of his countrymen, to impart to it some additional vigour and stability. At the same time, though the more penetrating among his personal friends and hearers had long marked him out for the accomplishment of some such work, it is clear that he had formed no such project himself, but was contented to follow up the religious principles, which entirely engrossed him, in whatsoever direction it might please Providence to lead him.

CHAPTER III.

LUTHER'S DISPUTE WITH TETZEL.

Luther's Visitation as deputy of Staupitz—his two letters to Spalatin concerning the Elector—remarks—the great variety of his occupations—his effective preaching—thus he had great local celebrity when Tetzel appeared at Jutterbock—his account of his first collision with Tetzel—his first movement was in the character of a parochial priest—Tetzel's fury rouses his indignation—he affixes his theses on the door of All Saints' Church—the substance of those theses—the doctrines proposed in them, and the limits of their application to the subject of indulgences—they proceeded from a hatred of the abuse and a friendly feeling towards the church—he sent a copy, with a letter, to Albert Archbishop of Magdeburg—the character of Albert of Brandenburg—his diocesan recommends him to be silent, and he promises obedience—rapidity with which the theses circulated—substance of a sermon on the same subject—reflections on the importance of the question in dispute, especially in the view taken of it by Luther—Tetzel publicly burnt the theses at Francfort—and published replies both to them and to the sermon—the former composed by Wimpina—their substance—they shifted the ground of defence from the preachers to the pope—Luther replied to them, and the students of Wittemberg burnt them—Luther solemnly disclaimed any share in this act.

THOUGH the name of Luther had not yet acquired any general or distant celebrity, it was not unknown nor without authority in the part of Germany where he dwelt. During the absence of Staupitz in the autumn of 1516, in the Low Countries, on an errand of superstition imposed on him by the elector, Luther was appointed to fill the office of vicar-general. In the discharge of his new duties he made a visitation in Misnia and Thuringia, and inspected about forty monasteries. Among them was that of Erfurth, in which he had so lately performed the drudgery of the humblest menial ;

where he had endured, too, such severe spiritual suffering; and had made so great progress both religious and intellectual. Nor did he fail to derive some sad instruction from his present employment. The exhibitions of dissension and immorality which it disclosed to him enlarged his knowledge of mankind, and placed more clearly before him the imperfections of the monastic department of the church. This double experience prepared him for the work upon which, though he knew it not, he was even now about to enter, and gave him confidence in his dealings both with ecclesiastical abuses and with the men who defended them. Nor did he, on his part, lose so excellent an opportunity of communicating his own religious convictions, but availed himself of the authority which his office gave him to introduce them on every occasion.

It is important to observe the relation in which Luther at that moment stood towards his sovereign. The following bold expressions are found in a letter which he addressed to Spalatin, the elector's chaplain, on June 8, 1516: "Many things please your prince and have great beauty and splendour in his eyes, which are displeasing and vile in the sight of God. I do not dispute that in secular matters he is of all men the most prudent; but, in the things pertaining unto God and the salvation of souls, I must declare that he is involved in sevenfold blindness. Nor do I say this in a corner, as a detractor; nor do I wish you by any means to conceal it; since I am prepared, if ever I should have an opportunity, to declare it face to face."

Six months afterwards (Dec. 14, 1516) he wrote again to the same Spalatin, on the same subject, in a somewhat different strain. After expressing his gratitude to the elector for a present of cloth, lately received from him, he proceeded: "As to what you write me,

that the illustrious prince makes frequent and honourable mention of me, it is no cause of rejoicing to me, but I pray the Lord God to repay his condescension with glory; for I am unworthy that any man should notice me, least of all a prince, and so good and so great a prince. Nay, I see and feel that those do me most good who make the worst mention of me. Yet I pray you to return thanks on my behalf, though I seek not praise either from you or any other man, since the praise of man is vain, and true praise cometh from God alone." The expression of earthly humility cannot always be certainly distinguished from that of spiritual pride. To feel so abject as to be unworthy of the mention of any man, yet at the same moment so exalted as to despise the commendation of a great and good prince, implies a condition of soul scarcely intelligible, except to souls of a similar constitution, animated by the same ardent and exclusive devotion. But the most superficial observer will recognise that Providence, which made Luther an object of attention and interest to his sovereign, before it committed him as it were alone to contend with the powers of the earth; and thus prepared for him, even in the prejudice of a humane and magnanimous prince, a place of refuge and protection.

The variety of occupations, for the most part professional and honourable, which Luther united in his own person, is vividly expressed by him in a letter to John Langus of the 26th of October, 1516. And it proves no less than the preceding quotations the very considerable local importance which he had already attained: "I ought to keep two secretaries or chancellors, for I do nothing all day long but write letters; and so it may be that I write the same things over and over again—but do you see to that. I am preacher to the convent, reader of prayers at table; as parochial pastor

and preacher I am in daily requisition; I am rector of the studies; vicar-general, that is prior eleven times over; I am inspector of the fish-ponds in Litzkau, counsel for the men of Hertzberg in Torgau, lecturer on St. Paul, commentator on the Psalms—besides all that business of letter-writing which, as I have said, consumes the greater part of my time. It is seldom that I have perfect leisure to perform my canonical hours; and along with all this I have my peculiar temptations and struggles with the flesh, the world, and the devil. See how idle a man I am!”

Among all these employments there was not one which gave him more extensive influence and reputation than that of preaching,—because he applied to it that direct force and simplicity of eloquence which speaks most effectively to the hearts of all, and especially because it brought him into contact with the lower classes. It is one thing to domineer in the disputations of the schools; it is another to rule the congregations of the people. Mere learning and acuteness, with the command of an elaborate or conventional phraseology, may suffice for the one; but the other requires different and almost opposite qualities. Luther united them all. With the scholar he was profound, with the dialectician ingenious, and with the peasant plain and earnest; and in the execution of his destined commission there was perhaps no single talent which proved so useful to him as that of adapting his own ideas to the understanding of the illiterate, and enforcing truths, not always simple or obvious in themselves, upon the unreflecting multitude.

It was some few months after the date of these letters, in the summer of 1517, that Tetzel presented himself in some towns near to Wittemberg, as Jutterbock, Servesta, and others, established his cross and banner, and preached and sold his indulgences. Among the purchasers were

some of Luther's parishioners. These returned and made their confessions as usual. Many of the sins confessed were heinous: Luther accordingly imposed on them, previous to absolution, the accustomed penance. Hereupon they pleaded their indulgences and refused obedience. Luther rejected the plea, and refused them absolution. On this they returned to Tetzel and complained to him of the little reverence with which the apostolical ordinance had been treated. Tetzel stormed and thundered after his fashion.

“At that time,” says Luther, in a work published above twenty years afterwards,* “I was preacher in the monastery at Wittemberg, a doctor, young and vigorous, fresh from the anvil of the schools, and warm and ready in my knowledge of Scripture. And when I saw the people running in multitudes after indulgences to Jutterbock and elsewhere—while I, as I trust to be saved by my Redeemer Christ! did not so much as know what those indulgences were, nor was there any one who was wiser—I began to preach to them with great moderation, and to assure them that they might employ themselves more profitably than in making excursions after such objects. I had previously hinted the same truth in a sermon preached in the church of the citadel, for which the Elector Frederic, who had obtained special indulgences for that very church, was displeased with me. So I was willing to be quiet, and took no notice of all the vaunts that Tetzel made about his indulgences, though they were reported to me.”

Such then was the commencement of the Reformation. Luther, at his confessional, in the unobtrusive discharge of his parochial duties, was invaded by a great practical

* “*Lutheri Apologia adversum Henricum Brunsvicensem.*” Anno 1541 edita.

evil, undermining morality, and endangering the salvation of the souls committed to his charge. It was not from the theological chair, it was not even from the pulpit, that the first shaft was discharged; it was the faithful pastor who was roused to protect his flock from corruption, and watch over its spiritual safety. So far was he from premeditating any attack upon the offensive practice,* that he had not even examined its general nature or origin; nor was he informed under what particular authority those actual indulgences were preached, nor to what purpose their profits were destined. An obvious abuse was presented to him; it shocked his common sense and his common piety; it misled the consciences of his people; his first impulse was to oppose it. He did so. But, perceiving the offence which he thereby gave, and not having fully considered the importance of the subject, he was willing to repress his transient indignation.

But this moderation did not last long. Tetzel was irritated by the contempt which Luther had shown for his merchandise; and, being ignorant of his character, and perhaps despising his youth and want of ecclesiastical dignity, thought to crush the rising insubordination by terror. Accordingly he menaced with the inquisition all those, who by rejecting the pardons of the pope questioned his authority; and at the same time prepared a pile of fagots in a public place, to remind them of the power with which he was armed.

* It is related that when on his visitation in 1516 he heard somewhat of a seller of indulgences named Tetzel, who was making a great sensation at Würtzen, and some of whose monstrous assertions respecting the value of his merchandise were repeated: "God willing," he said, "I will make a hole in his drum." This story may be true yet Luther may never afterwards have seriously reflected on the subject, till the nuisance was actually obtruded upon him.

Luther was the last of all men to dispute that power. "I was then a monk,* a papist even to utter madness, so drunk, nay, so steeped in the papal dogmas, that I would readily have lent a hand to kill any one who had dared to refuse any act of obedience to the pope. I was a perfect Saul—as are many others still living." Yet he was only in his thirty-fourth year; in temper he was warm, even to violence; he was incapable of fear in a good cause; and in this matter he felt a perfect conviction that he had some reason on his side, though he had not yet ascertained how much. Thus the threats of Tetzels moved, not his terror, but his indignation. He immediately turned his thoughts with his wonted ardour to the subject of indulgences. He collected such information as lay within his reach. Without any delay he drew up ninety-five theses, embodying the opinions which thus hastily occurred to him; and without any previous communication with any one, he affixed them, on the last day of October, to the door of the church of All Saints at Wittenberg.

The day and the place were well chosen. It was the eve of the festival of All Saints; and it was to that church that a large assemblage, not only of citizens, but of strangers, was preparing to throng on the morrow, so that the greatest possible publicity would be given to the propositions. There was no immediate risk which seemed to attend the act—not from the university, because that body shared to a great extent the opinions and feelings of Luther; not from the laity, because, besides the disgust generally prevalent at the barterings and impostures of Rome, there existed a peculiar repugnance among all who could and would reflect, to this particular practice; not from the elector, because he had prohibited

* *Præfat. Op.* The passage is cited in the preceding chapter.

the sale of these indulgences within his states.* Yet the moment which saw those theses nailed to the church door was one of the most critical in the history of Christendom; because the act was irrevocable;—because the hand which performed it was, in fact, compromised to all its consequences;—and because these, through their magnitude, through their extent, through the long continuity of the chain which bound them together, were important beyond all possibility of human calculation. And so far was Luther from possessing any foresight of them, that he did not design, when he lighted that torch, entirely to consume even the loftiest claim, even the boldest usurpation, of the pontifical church.

Let us express, in as few words as may be, the substance of these celebrated propositions:

“The whole life of a Christian ought to be a perpetual penance; yet not inward only, but likewise showing itself outwardly by works of mortification of the flesh: repentance and contrition, which form true penitence, last as long as a man is dissatisfied with himself—i. e. till he passes from this to eternal life. The pope can remit none, and pretends to remit none, but canonical punishments: nor can he remit any condemnation; he can only declare and confirm the remission which God himself has given; but God remits his sins to no man, who does not humble himself in all respects before the priest, His vicar.† Penitential canons are made for the living, not for the dead; the change of canonical punishments

* Such was the fact; his motive was, probably, rather to prevent the money of his subjects from being carried away to Magdeburg or Rome, than any objection in principle either to the doctrine or practice in question. Jutterbock belonged to the archbishop of Magdeburg.

† Prop. VII. “Nulli prorsus remittit Deus, quin simul eum subjiciat humiliatum in omnibus sacerdoti, suo vicario.” This proposition has been sometimes overlooked by the historians most devoted to Luther.

into those of purgatory is an unfounded doctrine; formerly they preceded absolution, as trials of contrition. The pope, when he speaks of the plenary remission of all penalties, means only those imposed by himself; he can remit to the souls in purgatory nothing that they ought canonically to have performed in this life.* Every bishop and curate possesses in his own diocese and parish the same power in respect to purgatory, that the pope has in general. Persons preach human inventions, who pretend that the moment the money sounds in the box, the soul escapes from purgatory. Remission of sins is granted to the prayers of the church, rather than to the keys of the pope; but the acceptance even of those prayers rests with God. Those who fancy themselves sure of salvation by letters of pardon will be damned, along with those who teach the doctrine. It is an anti-christian doctrine that the buying of such letters will confer pardon without contrition; while every Christian who feels sincere compunction has a plenary remission from penalty and from sin, without any such letters of pardon. Yet is the remission of the pope by no means to be despised, as a declaration of the remission by God.†

“Indulgences are to be preached with caution; people are to be taught that it is not the pope’s intention to recommend the purchase of indulgences, as in any way comparable with works of charity: through the increase of the spirit of charity man becomes better; through the acquisition of indulgences he becomes only more free from punishment. Christians are to be taught

* “*Igitur papa per remissionem plenariam omnium pœnarum non simpliciter omnium intelligit, sed a seipso tantummodo impositarum... Quia nullam remittit animabus in purgatorio, quam in hac vitâ debuissent secundum canones solvere.*” Props. xx. et xxii.

† “*Remissio tamen et participatio papæ nullo modo est contemnenda, quia, ut dixi, est declaratio remissionis divinæ.*” Prop. xxxviii.

that he who neglects a poor man and buys a pardon, buys, not the indulgence of the pope, but the indignation of God; that what is not superfluous is better expended on the necessities of life than on pardons; that the purchase of them is free and not commanded; that the pope both needs and desires the prayers of the faithful more than their money; that his indulgence is good if we do not put our trust in it, but extremely hurtful if it leads us to neglect piety;* that, if he were acquainted with the exactions of these venal preachers, he would rather that the church of St. Peter should fall to ruins, than be built out of the skin, flesh and bones of his flock; that the confidence of salvation from these letters is vain, and would still be so, though the commissioner, or the pope himself, were to pledge his soul for their efficacy. They are the enemies of the pope and of Christ, who, to favour the preaching of indulgences, forbid the preaching of the word of God.

“The treasures, whence the pope draws his indulgences, are not the merits of Christ and of the saints; since these operate inwardly for the purification of the soul without the aid of the pope; but properly the keys of the church (given through the merit of Christ); for it is clear that the authority of the pope is alone sufficient for the remission of punishments and cases.† The true

* “*Quod veniæ papæ sunt utiles, si non in eas confidunt (Christiani) sed nocentissimæ, si timorem Dei per eas amittant.*” “*Quod si papa nosset exactiones venalium predicatorum, mallet basilicam S. Petri in cineres ire, quam ædificare cute, carne et ossibus ovium suarum.*” *Propos. 49 et 50.*

† “*Thesauri ecclesiæ, unde papa dat indulgentias, neque satis nominati sunt neque cogniti apud populum Christi. Temporales certe non esse patet. . . . Nec sunt merita Christi et sanctorum: quia hæc semper sine papa operantur gratiam hominis interioris, crucem, mortem, infernumque exterioris. Sine temeritate dicimus Claves ecclesiæ, merito Christi donatas, esse thesaurum istum. Clarum est enim quod ad remissionem*

treasure of the church is the holy gospel of the glory and grace of God. The treasures of the gospel are nets by which the men of riches were formerly taken; but the treasures of the indulgence are nets now spread only for the riches of men.

“Bishops and curates are to receive with respect the commissioners of these indulgences; but to see at the same time that they do not retail their own dreams, instead of the pope’s commission. Anathema to him who speaks against the truth of the apostolical pardons; but a blessing on him who opposes the licentiousness of these preachers.* The pope’s indulgence cannot take away the least of our daily sins, so far as the blame or offence of it is concerned. To say that the cross, hung with the pope’s arms, is as powerful as the cross of Christ, is blasphemy. The bishops, pastors and divines, who allow these things to be taught to the people, will be called to account for it. This shameless preaching and praising of indulgences makes it difficult for the learned to defend the honour of the pope against the calumny, or at least against the shrewd questions, of the laity. Why, they say, does not the pope empty purgatory for the love of charity and the extreme necessity of the souls—a most excellent cause,—when he redeems souls innumerable for the love of money to build this Basilic—a cause of utter insignificance? Why does not he build St. Peter’s church with his own money, rather than with that of poor Christians, seeing that he is richer than the richest Crassus? To repress these acute arguments of laymen by mere authority, and not to confute them by reason, is to expose

pœnarum et casuum sola sufficit potestas papæ.” Propos. 56, 57, 58, 60, 61.

* “Contra veniarum apostolicarum veritatem qui loquitur sit ille anathema et maledictus. Qui vero contra libidinem et licentiam verborum concionatoris veniarum curam agit, sit ille benedictus.” *Propos. 71, 72.*

the church and the pope to ridicule, and all Christendom to misery. May we be rid then of those preachers who say to the people of Christ, Peace, peace—and there is no peace ! It is better through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of heaven than to trust in the security of a false peace.”

These propositions contain the doctrine of a free remission of sins ; they inculcate the necessity of sincere contrition and inward amendment and regeneration ; and it was a great glory to Luther to have revived and promulgated those essential truths, and an important step towards the reformation of religion. But, when we consider them in reference to the practical question at issue, we cannot fail to observe that they were ostensibly directed against the abuse, not against the existence, of indulgences. The power of the pope to grant them, the duty of the people to respect them, and of the commissioners to preach them, were distinctly asserted ; the points disputed were, the limits to which the power extended, and the manner in which the preaching should be conducted. Respecting the former of these questions Luther did indeed derogate very boldly, though with the appearance of perfect deference, from the authority so long usurped and so wantonly exercised by the See ; and his principles, if pushed to their extreme consequences, would have removed everything that made the indulgence attractive to the people, or lucrative to the pope. He left the name and naked substance as it originally existed ; but he stripped off the trappings and decorations. And as these had become the most conspicuous part, and in point of fact taken the place of the thing itself, so in assailing the abuse he assailed what in the practice and opinion of the day was the reality.

The manner of preaching the indulgences was a subordinate question. Yet, had they been more moderately

recommended, they had been less profitable. And had the pope restrained the commissioners within the limits prescribed by those principles, which Luther, whether honestly or skilfully, assumed to be the principles of the See, they would have produced absolutely no return to the apostolical treasury. So that the effect of these theses, however respectful their language, however moderate their principles, was an indirect attack upon a very fruitful source of the papal revenue.

At the same time it is easy to understand how they proceeded, as unquestionably they did proceed, from a spirit of sincere affection towards the church; not that blind and bigoted affection, which sees nothing but the nearest and the meanest interests of the object of its fondness; which persists in confounding the results of human cunning with the revelations of God; things that shock the first principles of reason and piety with things the most sacred; but that sober considerate regard, which, by purging away the admixture of evil, confirms and purifies what is really good. Luther already perceived that, in an age of advancing intelligence, there was no answer to the murmurs of the laity but in the removal of the abuse. And thus temperately did he propose to remove it: not assailing the prerogatives of the pope; not questioning the merits of the saints; not impugning the existence of purgatory; not even destroying the substance of the indulgence; but only stripping off the appendages, which did not properly belong to it, and restoring it to its original simplicity.

The positions of Luther were put forth, not as determined conclusions, but as questions for public disputation; and he presented himself on the morrow to sustain them before the university—but no one appeared to contest them. To give them greater publicity abroad, and to win for them, if possible, the countenance of the

hierarchy, he sent them on the day of their publication to Albert Archbishop of Magdeburg. He accompanied them by a letter to that prelate, in which he combined expressions of almost abject humility with considerable firmness of remonstrance. "Forgive me if I, who am the very dregs of men, presume to address your sublime grandeur. Christ is my witness that I have deferred to do that which I now venture to do only through the consciousness of my own littleness and meanness. May your highness design to regard a grain of dust, and receive my prayer in your pontifical clemency!" He then proceeded to inform him that indulgences were circulating throughout the country in his name, and that the ignorant people who bought them thought themselves sure of their salvation, however monstrous the crimes which they might have perpetrated.* "Great God! the souls intrusted to your care are trained not to life but to death. The account which will be required of you becomes every day more strict. I could keep silence no longer. No! it is not by the office of his bishop that man is saved. Scarcely even is the righteous saved, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life. If we are to listen to the preachers, nothing is to be proclaimed but the indulgence. As if it were not the chief and only duty of the bishops to teach men the gospel and the love of Christ! How awful then and dangerous is it for a bishop to allow the gospel to be withheld, and the indulgences alone to be rung in the ears of the people!" He then alluded to the "Instruction," published in the name, "though cer-

* "Credunt infelices animæ . . . quod animæ de purgatorio statim evolent . . . deinde tantas esse has gratias, ut nullum sit adeo magnum peccatum, etiam, ut aiunt, si per impossibile, quis matrem Dei violasset, quis possit solvi; item quod homo per istas indulgentias liber sit ab omni pœna et culpa . . ." *Luther to Albert of Brandenburg.*

tainly without the knowledge," of the archbishop ; he remarked on the exaggerated importance therein attached to the indulgence, and conjured him, by his hope in Christ, to recal the book and issue other orders to the preachers. "Otherwise be prepared to hear a voice which shall some day refute those preachers to your own great disgrace and scandal."

Albert of Brandenburg, to whom this letter was addressed, was the younger brother of the elector Joachim, and himself also archbishop and elector of Mayence. He was a very young man, not devoid of talents, nor of worldly generosity, and endued with a strong taste for literary society. He was not blind to the abuses of the church. He was no patron of the ignorance or profligacy of priests or monks, and the evils, which he saw and felt, his candour disposed him to acknowledge. He did not despise the gospel, he did not persecute those who preached it. He was entirely free from the bitterness of ecclesiastical bigotry. Yet, with all this, he was licentious in his morals, profuse in his expenditure, magnificent in his court and retinue, in dispositions and habits a mere secular prince. Whatever may have been his religious principles, he never applied them to his practice ; whatever his disapprobation of the conduct of the inferior clergy, he never extended it to his own ; whatever his wish for a reformation in the church, he never would have consented to any retrenchment of the splendour and prerogatives of the hierarchy. His character, as others have observed, bore in many respects a strong resemblance to that of Leo X. ; yet the comparison is to the advantage of Albert, whose fewer years had exposed him to less corruption, and whose court was not devoured by the inveterate, traditional, hereditary immorality of Rome.

The archbishop made no reply to the communication of Luther. But the Bishop of Brandenburg, who was his diocesan, and with whom the young doctor of Wit-

temberg was in high repute and esteem, did at once interfere to restrain his zeal. The prelate declared to him, that he was assailing the authority of the church ; that he would bring himself into great difficulties ; that his best wisdom was to remain quiet. At the same time he sent to him a confidential messenger, an ecclesiastic of rank, the Abbot of Lenin, charged to impress upon him similar admonitions. And these he still farther recommended by the candid assurance, that he found nothing in the theses adverse to the Catholic faith, and that he strongly condemned the abuse condemned by Luther. Yet he conjured him, by his love for peace, by the respect due to his bishop, to desist from any further proceeding. Luther was abashed and overpowered : “ Well,” he said, “ be it so. I prefer obedience to the gift of miracles, even if I possessed that gift.”*

But it was now too late. The decisive step was already taken. The propositions were gone forth to the world. Within a fortnight from the memorable eve of All Saints they were circulating in almost every part of Germany. From Germany they spread throughout the rest of Christendom, and in less than a month they had found their way to Rome. The eagerness with which they were devoured in many places, the profound sensation which they produced in all, sufficiently proved that they were not a premature appeal to the reason of mankind, like the doctrines of Wicliff and Huss and so many others ; but that the spirit of the age was sufficiently advanced to understand, and, if to understand, to approve them. This great experiment Luther had made

* “ Ego vero pudore confusus, quod tantum abbatem deinde tantus pontifex tam humiliter ad me mitteret et solius hujus rei gratia dixi : ‘ Bene sum contentus ; malo obedire quam miracula facere, etiamsi possem ;’ et reliqua quæ meum studium excusarent.” *Luther to Spalatin. November 1517.*

by their means upon the intelligence of his generation. Had it failed, he might possibly have spared himself the pains and peril of any further enterprise, and either subsided under the smiles of his diocesan into a complacent churchman, or, at most, introduced some salutary changes into the system of theological education. But it succeeded; and the certainty thus acquired, that his principles were shared by multitudes who were only waiting for a commanding voice to rouse and direct them, gave him courage and confidence to persist. Besides, so many other lesser instruments were set in action by this first impulse, as to implicate him in all its consequences, and to make it morally impossible for him, constituted too as he was, to withdraw from the field.

He preached about the same time two sermons on the subject of indulgences and penitence. Herein he maintained that, following the scholastic division of the sacrament of penance under the three heads of contrition, confession and satisfaction, it was only the last of these which was touched by the indulgence; that even this satisfaction comprehended prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, which were improperly superseded by the indulgence; that it did not however appear from Scripture that satisfactions, according to their usual sense, were required by God; that his inflictions were for the correction, not for the punishment, of his creatures; that He alone could dispense with chastisements imposed by Himself alone; and that, even if there were such satisfactions, it was more worthy of a Christian to perform them as salutary pains, than to receive indulgences for them; that these indulgences were founded on the supposition, that the penance which could not be performed during life was to be completed in purgatory, unless remitted by a dispensation of the pope;—a false foundation—for, if Divine inflictions were meant, these could only be re-

mitted through the gratuitous grace of God, who required no more than the conversion of the heart—if canonical inflictions, the church could impose none after death, because it was impossible to perform them; that after all it was not certain, nor capable of any proof, that indulgences did withdraw souls from purgatory; nor to himself indeed was it credible. From this it followed that the surest method of assisting the souls of the departed was to pray for them, and to perform works of piety.

As the theses, or subjects for academical disputation, were published in Latin, for the consideration of the ecclesiastical classes and the more learned among the laity, so the sermons were delivered in German for the instruction of the great body of the people. United, they formed an appeal to the entire German nation, and to the more enlightened in every nation: at the same time, they confirmed and illustrated each other; and from them we may learn, with tolerable accuracy, what was the extent of Luther's views, and what the original ground on which he took his stand.

Many writers, reflecting on the multitude and magnitude of the vices which then stained the church, on the audacity of its usurpations, the keenness of its rapacity, the boundlessness of its pretensions, the impudence of many of its superstitions, and, above all, the grand forgery, on which the fabric of papal authority was almost entirely constructed, have been astonished that the insurrection should at last have broken out on a matter comparatively so unimportant as the abuse of indulgences. Even Roman Catholic historians, without being so sensible of the enormity of the other scandals, sometimes affect to despise, as wholly insignificant, the subject of the first disputes.

To a Papist indeed of those days—to one educated in

the scarcely disputed principles of Rome, and nestling in the bosom of her corruptions, this might well seem so ; since there were many other abuses far more essential to the dignity of the see, and even more valuable to the apostolical chancery, than this. But to an earnest and ardent Christian ; to a man who believed his Bible ; who believed that his own eternal welfare, and that of all men, depended on their actions and convictions upon earth ; and who was impressed besides with the necessity of inward purity and vital faith as the means of salvation ;—to such a Christian, standing in a situation of which the duties required him not only to improve himself on this essential matter, but also to communicate his information to others ; animated too by a strong sense of duty and an enlarged philanthropy—in short, to Luther—that was no insignificant evil which corrupted the morals of the faithful, which misled their piety, and seduced them, as he thought, from the hope of life into the paths of everlasting perdition.

That a sceptre should have been transferred from one hand to another by the authority of the popes, may not have moved his indignation. That they should have disposed, by a breath of their lips or a stroke of their pen, of half the world, may have seemed to him matter of no essential consequence. With still less consideration may he have regarded the questions of Annates and Reservations and Expectative Graces, and all the sordid expedients for the sale of the patronage of the church. Even the vices of individual popes and the scandals of the court of Rome he may have viewed as accidental visitations fraught with no general danger to the great interests of mankind. But when he saw a system deliberately established and officially upheld, of which it was the necessary result to seduce the souls of Christians, as he believed, to certain destruction, he deemed this no

trifling evil, no unimportant abuse, but the most terrible, the most fatal, the most loudly crying for instant extirpation, of any that beset the church. It was with the heart of a believer, bleeding for his ignorant brethren deluded to their damnation, that he took up this question. And the more deeply he entered into it, the more confirmed he became in his fundamental doctrine, and his resolution to uproot a practice so fatally subversive of it.

Had the hierarchy at once interfered to place the subject of indulgences on the principles proposed by Luther, or, at any rate, to repress the extravagance of the preachers, he might have rested for a while contented with his triumph; and at least the actual controversy would have terminated there. But he was not yet an object of fear; and the defenders of established evils seldom concede anything except to fear. The prelates were silent. Tetzel was allowed, without any reproof, without any warning, to take his course. It was sure to be violent; and as surely, in an age no longer unenlightened, in the midst of a people awakened or awakening, it was injurious to his own cause. He erected a scaffold in a public market-place in the suburbs of Francfort. He clamoured against Luther. Arrayed in his inquisitorial habiliments, he denounced him as a heretic deserving the penal fire; and then, in the impotence of his wrath, he consigned the theses and sermons to those flames, to which he would far more gladly have livered the body of the offender.

Still even Tetzel perceived that this act was not a confutation of the heresy. Accordingly he published a reply to the sermons; and it was couched in language so rude, that he may probably have been himself its composer.* In this he maintained—"That works were

* It was entitled "Vorlegung gemacht von Bruder Johann Tetzel,

required meet for repentance : that sufficient satisfaction was likewise required, since God, notwithstanding the contrition of Adam, sent His own Son as a satisfaction for his offence : that Christ remitted the sins of Mary Magdalen without satisfaction, only because he held the keys of perfection, and knew the depth of her inward sorrow ; but that the keys committed to the priests were only ministerial, so that these had no choice but to impose outward works for satisfaction : that the burden of those works might be removed by the pope through the power delegated by Christ to Peter and his successors, on certain conditions ; and with the works the punishment to which the Divine justice had sentenced the sinner : that, in like manner, the pope could remit to those who had not sufficiently atoned for their sins in this life the punishments due to them in purgatory : that those who obtained indulgences to that end were in a state of true contrition ; and that contrition, be it as great as it might, was of no avail without satisfaction : that, in cases of extreme necessity, alms might be given, and were even of some value towards the merit unto salvation ; but that indulgences were the works of charity, which were most valuable as a satisfaction in the place of punishment.”

Some reply to the theses being likewise necessary, Tetzel, distrusting his own sufficiency, prevailed upon a distinguished doctor in the university of Francfort, Conrad Wimpina, to undertake the work. Two dissertations were presently produced, the larger containing an hundred and six propositions, the other fifty ; the one relating to the doctrine of indulgences, the other to the

&c . . . wider einen vermessen Sermon von 20 irrigen Artikeln Päpistlichen Abtatz und Gnade belangende allen Christlen-glaubigen Menschen zu wissen.”

papal authority ; and they were read and defended by Tetzal, on January 20, 1518, before a large body of monks attached to Wimpina and the established opinions. The matter of them was much the same as that propounded in the composition of Tetzal ; and a single specimen may be sufficient in this age to satisfy any curiosity as to the kind of arguments by which the indulgence was defended. In respect to those produced by Tetzal, it seems only important to remark—first, how entirely the doctrine of justification by faith was overlooked in them, or rather how directly the principles contained in them impugned that doctrine ; next, how readily the commissary interpreted Luther's attack as intended against the substance, not the abuse, of the indulgence ; and farther, how artfully he took up his ground of defence, not on the preachings and barterings of himself and his brother subalterns, but on the power and prerogatives of the pope ; thus imputing to Luther principles which he disclaimed, and designs of insubordination and disloyalty, from which no man was at that time farther removed than he. It was, no doubt, extremely convenient to Tetzal to shelter his own delinquencies under such high protection ; but it was not to the interest of the see that the very sources of its authority should be compromised by the grossest enormities of its meanest officers ; or that the public indignation, which would perhaps have wasted itself on a distant outwork, should be thus invited to turn against the very heart of the sacred citadel. Yet such was the effect of the method of defence adopted by those men.

Luther replied. He took some pains to distinguish the penance imposed by the church from the repentance required by Christ, and to show that the pope could have no power to remit the latter. He likewise dwelt with much warmth upon the cry of heresy which was

already raised against him, and which wounded him the more through his consciousness of perfect devotion to the see of Rome. Yet the slander and its attendant menaces produced consequences the opposite to those expected; they irritated much more than they terrified him; they roused him to a fiercer resistance; they even tended by their prematurity and injustice to drive him into the very course which it was meant to close against him. Nothing was then more offensive to Luther than the stigma of heresy. Yet the finding it undeservedly affixed to himself would gradually mitigate his horror, first, of the name so wantonly cast upon deeds of the purest intention—then of the thing, whatever that thing might be, which was represented by it.

A different and perhaps more effective answer to the acts and writings of Tetzel was given by the disciples of Luther and other students at Wittenberg. “These young men” (says Luther in an epistle written soon afterwards to John Langus),* “being thoroughly sick of the old sophistical method of study, and thirsting for the Holy Bible, and it may be also through favourable inclination towards me, as soon as they learnt that a man was arrived from Halle sent by Tetzel to distribute his ‘Positions,’ instantly beset the fellow, and bullied him for daring to bring such stuff hither. Then they bought of him some few copies, and got possession of the rest by force, or other means. Then they published an intimation, that all who might wish to be present at

“*Ut sis præmonitus siqua fama forte ad vos pervenerit de conflagratione propositionum Tecellinarum, ne plus ullus addat, ut fieri solet, quam sit rerum gestarum, hæc est fabula: studentes, ut sunt mire pertæsi sophistici hujus antiqui studii, cupidissimi vero Sacræ Bibliæ, forte et mei favoris studio. . . . Sum extra noxam, sed timeo quod totum mihi imputabitur. Quid futurum sit nescio, nisi quod periculum meum eo ipso fit periculosius.*”

the conflagration and funeral of the Positions of Tetzel should assemble in the market-place, at the second hour ; and then and there they burnt them to the number of almost eight hundred copies. The prince had no information of their design ; nor had the senate, nor the rector, nor indeed any of us. In fact, we are all much displeased that so serious an insult has been offered to the man by our students ; and I most of all displeased. I am free from all blame ; yet I fear that the whole will be imputed to me. What will be the consequence I know not, except that my situation, even now no secure one, will become still more dangerous."

In another letter, addressed to his ancient tutor at Erfurth, Jodocus, Luther disclaimed still more strongly all participation in that act of violence : " Could you imagine that I had so far lost my understanding and forgotten myself as to have offered—I an ecclesiastic and a theologian, in a place too that is not mine—so gross an outrage to a person occupying so dignified a station ?" There is no reason why we should suspect this declaration. Hitherto the conduct of Luther, though marked by much resolution, had been free from any approach to rashness. The act besides was in advance of the progress which he had then made in opinion, or principle. It was an act of ecclesiastical insubordination, of which he was yet incapable. It was an act of peril too, and impolitic, not only through the storm which it might bring down from the inquisition and the hierarchy, but also because it could not fail to be displeasing to the calm and cautious temperament of the Elector of Saxony—and Luther was not blind to any of these considerations.

CHAPTER IV.

LUTHER'S CONTROVERSIES WITH PRIERIAS, ECK, AND HOCHSTRATEN.

Various effects produced on various characters by Luther's Theses—on Reuchlin—Erasmus—Maximilian—Frederick of Saxony—the religious character of the last—his talents and many excellent qualities—the Theses received with contempt at Rome—Leo's remark—overlooked even by the German prelates—his own Augustinians entreat him to desist and save the Order from the scandal of his disobedience—Luther's reply to them—all the underlings rise in arms against him, especially the Dominicans—the controversy spreads—First rises Sylvester Prierias at Rome and publishes his Dialogues—arguments contained in them—their effect only to irritate—then John of Eck writes his Obelisks—Luther's remarks on them—then James Hochstraten, an inquisitor—the three principles involved in these three attacks—Luther's reply to Prierias—to whose four Fundamentals he opposes two texts from Scripture and a passage of St. Augustine—reflections—herein he lays down unpremeditatedly the two great principles of the Reformation—Prierias afterwards answers—and is then condemned to silence by the pope—Luther answers the Obelisks by Asterisks—his reply to Hochstraten—Erasmus's remarks upon these controversies, attesting the good done to Luther's cause by the violence of his adversaries.

THE strong sensation so generally excited by the first proceedings of Luther soon ripened into a deep and deliberate interest; and this interest was, among various classes, as various as their circumstances, principles and capacities. The decided friends of reform, those who detested the abuses of the church and were bent on removing them, of course applauded his enterprise and offered up prayers for its success. Yet was there no one, even among these, who at once came forward to seek a share in the honour and peril of the

adventure. There were others, and among them some of power and dignity both in church and state, who perceived the rectitude of his principles and admired his courage; but they considered the undertaking too dangerous for one so humble and unprotected; and, whatever secret vows they may have breathed in his behalf, they were cautious not, by any act or expression of sympathy, to involve themselves in his impending ruin. Others again, though they deplored the corruptions of the church and the grievances of the people; though the history of the preceding century might have taught them that it was in vain to hope from the church itself for any cure either for the one or the other; and though the movement of Luther seemed to promise the result which they desired; yet dreaded the remedy more than they hated the evil, and thought any endurance preferable to the confusion attendant upon change. Well-meaning, short-sighted, and pusillanimous, they shrank before the uncertain creations of their own fearful fancy and forgot the insult and oppression under which they were actually prostrate.

Such were the feelings which divided the more enlightened or less bigoted portion of the Christian community. But there existed besides a large and powerful mass of men directly opposed to any project of reform; men, whom early prejudices, carefully instilled and deeply imbibed—whom the spirit of professional zeal—whom the enjoyment or expectation of authority and rank—whom the keen sense of pecuniary interest and personal comfort, as dependent on the maintenance of the church in its full integrity of good and evil, use and abuse—united by the strongest worldly ties in defence of the thing established. Blinded by the long possession of power, and by the impunity with which the exertions of reforming councils and the murmurs of an oppressed

people had hitherto been eluded or disdained, the higher ranks of the hierarchy regarded with undue contempt the humble operations of Luther. The prerogatives, which had not been shaken at Constance or Basle, could have little to apprehend from the academical lucubrations of a Saxon monk.

When Reuchlin, towards the conclusion of a life spent in perpetual conflict with bigotry, wearied and worn with strife, received the Theses of Luther, he returned thanks to God for having raised him up so powerful a successor: "Thanks be to God!" he cried; "the monks have now found a man who will give them such full employment, that they will be glad to leave my old age to pass away in peace." Erasmus, in the height of his reputation and the vigour of his faculties, welcomed with secret joy that manifesto against ecclesiastical imposture. Maximilian read the propositions with satisfaction, and without any contempt either for the warning which they sent forth, or for the quarter whence they came. He considered that their author might be made useful in two capacities—as an instrument against those monastic abuses with which all Germany was disgusted; and, if need should be, against the higher powers of the church. "Take care of the monk Luther," he thus advised the elector, "for the time may come when we shall require his services." But the elector beheld these first proceedings with distrust and fear. Attached beyond all other princes to peace and concord, yielding to no one in rational devotion to the church, he trembled at the mighty contentions which might arise from these beginnings, and frequently signified the sorrow with which he saw them.

Frederick was remarkable in early life for the fervency of his religious zeal. Under that influence he had undertaken a pilgrimage to the sepulchre of Christ; and, as-

suming on that holy spot the spurs and sword of Godfrey, had sworn devoted allegiance, as her faithful knight and champion, to the Catholic church. Even at the period which I am describing he had in no respect seceded from that vow ; so far otherwise, that, having lately constructed the church of All Saints, he resolved that it should be distinguished above all others by the multitude and sanctity of its relics ; and accordingly, in 1516, he sent forth Staupitz himself on a commission to procure them. For the same purpose he had received bulls of Indulgence both from Julius and Leo ; and all this had been attended with so much success, that Rome itself could scarcely boast an edifice more richly furnished with the implements of superstition. From a prince thus ardent in his youthful devotion, thus confirmed in his zeal for the ecclesiastical practices, what else could be expected but an obstinate adhesion, under all circumstances, to the cause of Rome ? Yet such was not in the character of Frederick. He was endowed with a strong and clear understanding, and some excellent principles. Above all, he loved justice—and he loved his subjects. He was not passionate even in his prejudices ; but, ever considerate and calm, with a mind never closed against any suggestion of reason or virtue, he was capable of advancing in wisdom as he grew in years, and of casting off, even in the decline of life, the errors which he had adopted so excusably ; excusably—for, his strong religious feelings having no channel open to them, except that prescribed by the church, and no suspicion of the purity of that church having been awakened in his mind, he fell through darkness into the established practices, and applied his very piety to extend the limits of what he mistook for holiness.

When the propositions of Luther were placed, as they were presently placed, in the hands of Leo, he regarded

the matter with absolute contempt. "A drunken German," he is reported to have said, "has written these things; when he shall be sober again, he will repent of his lucubrations." Or, if this speech be falsely ascribed to him, there is another which rests on better authority, and which equally proves how lightly he treated the affair: "This brother Martin has a very excellent genius, and the whole thing is a jealous squabble among monks."* It was natural that Leo X., with all his penetration and political sagacity, looking down from the height of his power and the centre of his magnificence upon the proceeding of a single German monk, should altogether underrate it. The prelates of Rome were not more clear-sighted than their pontiff; neither is this a matter of surprise. But that the hierarchy of Germany should, with very few exceptions, have misconceived the character of the movement, is indeed somewhat strange. It might have been supposed that they at least were not unacquainted with the spirit which was diffused throughout their country. They at least should have perceived that those were no longer the days of Arnold or Huss, when the expression of reason and piety could be at once extinguished by a pope, or a council more tyrannical than a pope. They should have marked the growing intelligence of the German nation; they should have learnt, that the time was now come, in which they must sacrifice some portion of the amazing mass of impurity on which they flourished, if they would preserve the rest; they should have perceived, that Luther was no more than the voice of the community, proclaiming to them that truth. But they refused to listen to it with instructive attention, and, instead of seizing its true mean-

* "Che fra Martino aveva un bellissimo ingegno; e che coteste erano invidie fratesche."

ing, they heard in it only the faint impatient remonstrance of one, and that one humble. And thus they sat waiting with unconcern, until it should please the authorities to put it to silence.

Among the inferior members of the ecclesiastical body, some, from whom Luther had a right to expect, if not open assistance, at least secret sympathy, were the first to discourage his undertaking. The prior and sub-prior of the Augustinian convent at Wittemberg, trembling at the consequences of his rashness, formally entreated him to desist. They urged that it was his duty to submit to the wishes of his community, and to spare it the scandal overhanging it through his insubordination. They represented that the rival orders were already exulting in this prospect, especially the Franciscans, who, being then in bad repute at Rome, longed to welcome the Augustinians as partners in their disgrace. Luther calmly replied, "Beloved father, all this affair will presently fall to the ground, if it be not undertaken in the name of the Lord. But if it be so, we must leave it to the Lord to finish it."* In these unanswerable words we read another proof of the holiness of his motive. The honour of his order, the obedience due to his superior, were matters deserving in his mind not so much as a sentence of notice or apology. The question with him was simply this—Whether in his present endeavour he had rightly understood the will of God, or not? It was for the Lord to decide this question by giving or withholding His countenance, and Luther was willing to rest everything on that issue. On the other hand, the anxiety of the prior and his brethren proves that even those ecclesiastics who

* "Totum hoc statim concidet, si in nomine Domini cæptum non est. Sin autem, Deo rem committi perficiendam." Ap. *Gerdesium*. Hist. Evang. Renov. t. i. § 62.

most associated with Luther and had the closest acquaintance with his acts and motives expected no other result from his present operation than destruction to himself and obloquy to all connected with him.

While the more exalted and the more moderate ecclesiastics were thus observing the proceedings of Luther with a reserved displeasure, allied, in the former, to contempt, in the latter to fear, the subordinate members of the hierarchy, the dependents and expectants, the everlasting tools and brands of bigotry and persecution,* had already taken the field with the accustomed clamour. According to them, the majesty of the pope, the authority of the church, the sanctity of the religion—all that was venerable on earth, or holy in heaven—was insulted and endangered. The *Ketzergeschrei*, the well-known cry of heresy, which, though somewhat disused in later years, was yet by no means worn out, was raised with obstreperous eagerness. Immediate vengeance was invoked upon the offender; and so sanguine were the bloodhounds and so sure of their victim, that his approaching execution, within a few weeks or even days, was confidently predicted throughout Germany, and not uncommonly believed. The Dominicans were the foremost in the chace; partly because the interests of their order were in some degree compromised in the person of Tetzl and the success of his traffic, chiefly because they were the favoured and privileged servants and familiars of the pope, and the especial ministers of his inquisitorial wrath.

Hitherto the controversy had been confined almost to

* Luther, writing to Spalatin, as early as February 15, 1518, and speaking of the clamour raised against him by his Theses, says:—"Ego veritatis amore in eum disputationis labyrinthum dedi me ipsum et excitavi in me sexcentos Minotauros, imo et Rhadamanthotaurus et Kakotaurus. . . ."

the spot where it arose. It now spread more widely and in many directions ; its character too was greatly altered by the circumstance that the antagonist who first presented himself in the lists issued from Rome itself. He was a person of considerable rank in the church. Sylvester Prierias was prior-general of the Dominican order, master of the sacred palace, and censor of the press ; and his ecclesiastical principles were such as became those dignities. It was in the last of those three characters that he was officially obliged to notice the Theses of Luther ; but he stepped beyond the limits both of duty and discretion when he undertook to confute them. Yet he did so ; and in the December of 1517 he put forth a Dialogue, addressed to the pope, by which he doubtless intended to extinguish the feud. He professed indeed to have employed only three days' labour on his composition—so easy a task it seemed to crush this Saxon innovator ! Yet his production was calculated, as matters then stood, to produce the opposite effect.

In the first place it abounded with the most violent abuse of Luther. Moderate as he had hitherto been in matter, obsequious in profession, it stigmatised him as heretic and heresiarch ; it charged him with wickedness and stupidity ; it called him blasphemer and demon. What worse had the language of invective in store for him, if he should indeed shake off the yoke and raise the banner of rebellion ? What further opprobrium had he to dread, should he really proceed to those extremes, from which he yet shrank away with terror ? Again, Prierias, as is the nature of little minds, atoned for slander by adulation—for slander of what seemed humble and defenceless, by adulation to the mighty despotism under which he flourished. He laid down positions to the following effect : That the doctrine of the Roman church and of the pope of Rome was an infallible rule

of faith, from which Scripture itself derived strength and authority; that the authority of the church and of the popes was greater than that of Scripture;* that the same church was infallible, not in word only, but in deed, in faith and in morals; that the pope through his indulgences could remit any degree of sin, even to the violation, were such an act possible, of the mother of God; that the indulgence, though not revealed in Scripture, was no less certainly established by the authority of the pope; and that he who denied any of these positions was a heretic, wilfully straying away from the path of salvation.

To exaggerate disputed pretensions in the hour of danger is the common resource of that timidity which is the parent of rashness. Such may not, however, have been the feeling of Prierias; he probably shared the imagined security of the court of Leo, and saw no serious danger in the puny strife which disturbed the neighbourhood of Wittenberg. He may have desired no more than to recommend his zeal to his master; or he may have poured forth the spontaneous produce of his honest faith. Nor were his opinions ill suited to the air of Italy. But so soon as they crossed the Alps and displayed their naked arrogance under a German sky, it was their immediate effect to provoke and irritate thought and reason, and inflame the already kindled embers of opposition.

About the same time arose another adversary, of greater talents and higher literary reputation, and of scarcely less virulence; this was John of Eck, doctor in theology, and then vice-chancellor of the university of Ingolstadt. He had published some learned works, and

* Gerdesius. *Historia Evang. Renov.*, tom. i. sect. 85. It is important to observe how the prior-general set his seal on the most licentious of all the assertions of Tetzel.

through a similarity of pursuits had contracted a close intimacy with Luther, who had sent him, as has been already mentioned, his Theses against Aristotle. Respecting the present attack, Luther, writing on March 24, 1518, to John Sylvius Egranus, preacher of Zwickau, expressed his feelings as follows: "A scholar of excellent and truly ingenious erudition and erudite genius, and, what hurts me still more, a person bound to me by a strong and recent friendship, has lately composed certain 'Obelisks' against my Propositions*—I mean the distinguished John Eck; and if I were ignorant of the devices of Satan I should be surprised at the fury, with which he has broken a new and very delightful friendship, without warning, without communication, without so much as bidding me farewell. He has written these Obelisks, however, in which he calls me drunkard, Bohemian, heretic, seditious, impertinent, rash, besides a number of lighter reproaches, such as somnolent, silly, illiterate, and, above all, despiser of the sovereign pontiff. In a word, he has uttered nothing but the blackest calumnies, expressing my name and marking my positions. His Obelisks contain nothing but malice and the rust of a raging mind."

As the subject chiefly treated by the master of the palace was the spiritual authority of the pope, so the sententious doctor of Ingolstadt wielded for the most part the weapons of his own craft. His was rather a schoolman's attack on the theology of the Theses, than a churchman's on their ecclesiastical principles. He argued against the doctrine of justification as laid down by Luther, and he argued after the fashion of the age. In-

* "Scripsit nuper adversus meas Propositiones *Obeliscos* aliquot insignis vereque ingeniosæ eruditionis et eruditi ingenii homo, et quod magis urit antea mihi magna recenterque contracta amicitia conjunctus Johannes Eckius ille. . . et nisi cogitationes Satanæ scirem, &c. . . ."

somuch, that, in the same letter to Egranus, Luther ventured to say—"I could almost swear that there is not a single scholastic divine who understands so much as a single chapter either of the New or Old Testament—no, not even a single section of the philosopher Aristotle."

In respect to the breach of friendship and want of courtesy charged against Eck, it is proper to mention that he afterwards disclaimed any intention of publishing his Obelisks at all; declaring, in a letter to the Elector of Saxony, that they were composed only as a confidential communication, and for the private satisfaction of the bishop of his diocese.

A third antagonist appeared almost at the same time, of a different stamp again, and on different ground; this was James Hochstraten, a native of Brabant, professor of theology at Cologne, a Dominican and an inquisitor. He had already acquired some distinction in the controversy with Reuchlin, as the unmuffled advocate of ignorance and persecution. In the same character he presented himself anew against the Theses, or rather against the person, of Luther. For in the fulfilment of his executive ministry he deemed the chastisement of the offender to be the most effectual confutation of the heresy. He therefore disdained the more tedious and uncertain process of sophistry or slander, and demanded an immediate appeal to the sword. "It is treason against the church," he cried, "to allow so detestable a heretic to live an hour longer. Away with him at once to the scaffold!" And this counsel he pressed upon the pope with all the clamour of an honest zeal.

These three opponents advanced against Luther from different quarters and without any confederacy. They had of course many principles in common; yet each was armed with his own peculiar weapon and attacked after his own fashion. The pope, the schools and the inqui-

sition were in march against the monk of Wittenberg. But this treble assault was conducted with so much intemperance, insolence and temerity, as to offer only the means of a treble triumph to the assailed.

Luther replied to them all. Prierias had supported his positions by the arguments of the schools and on the principles at that time recognised as the foundation of ecclesiastical ratiocination. He arranged his subject under several fundamentals.—*Fundamentum Primum*: The universal church is, essentially, the assembly of all believers in Christ for the purpose of divine worship; but, virtually, it is the church of Rome, the head of all churches, and the sovereign pontiff. The Roman church, representatively, is the college of cardinals; but, virtually, it is the pope, who is the head of the church, though in a different sense from Christ. *Fundamentum Secundum*: Since the universal church cannot err in its decisions concerning faith and morals, so also a true council, seeking seriously to understand the truth, cannot err (and this I mean including its head) upon the whole; though it may be deceived by first appearances, and even has been deceived; but, at last, through the Holy Spirit, it has attained the truth. Neither in like manner can the Roman church, nor can the pope, deciding after that fashion, be deceived as pope; *i. e.*, *ex-officio*, and striving his best to understand the truth. *Fundamentum Tertium*: Whoever does not acquiesce in the doctrine of the Roman church and the pope as an infallible rule of faith, whence even Scripture itself derives strength and authority, is a heretic. *Fundamentum Quartum*: The Roman church can decree what it will concerning faith and morals both in word and deed. Whence it comes that custom obtains the force of law, because the will of the prince is expressed, permissively or effectively, by deeds. And consequently, as a heretic is one who has wrong

opinions concerning scriptural truth; so one who has wrong opinions concerning the doctrine and deeds of the church, in respect to faith and morals, is a heretic. Hence the corollary: He who asserts that the Roman church cannot rightfully do that which indeed (*de facto*) it does, is a heretic.

I shall not encumber these pages with many specimens of the general reasoning by which the despotism of the pope was defended. What is founded in falsehood must be upheld by sophistry. The forgery of the false decretals was not a greater insult upon truth than the method of the scholastics. The fabrication of Isidore and the abuse of Aristotle had a more intimate relation than at first sight appears; and it was morally certain that the age, which should be advanced enough to reject the one, would not long endure the other. Such, however, were the grounds on which the most essential questions were then argued; and the history of those times will be imperfectly understood unless we bear in mind that such was not only the best, but the only, system of reasoning taught to the theological scholar; that he consequently used it with a thorough conviction of its soundness, and disdained, if indeed he recognised as reasoning at all, any other mode of sustaining a learned position.

To the fundamentals of Prierias Luther opposed two texts from Scripture and a passage from St. Augustine. The texts were from St. Paul:* “Prove all things; hold fast by that which is good.”

“Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”

“I have learned,” St. Augustine wrote to St. Jerome, “to render the honour of infallibility to the writers of the

* 1 Thessalon. v. 21, and Galat. i. 8.

canonical books, and to none besides them : as to others, I do not believe the things that they teach, simply because it is they who teach them."

"By these fundamentals, if you, Prierias, understand me, you understand that your whole Dialogue is overthrown." He entered, however, at some length into the general question at issue, and argued with great moderation against the principles of ecclesiastical and papal authority as laid down by his opponent. And though in the course of this tract he inveighed with some vehemence against the scandals which had disgraced the see and the court of Rome, and strongly alluded to the proverbial profligacy of that city, yet he failed not so to distinguish between the scandals of the see and the personal character of the pontiff as to set forth the latter in far too bright a light. . . . "I know, likewise, that we have an excellent pope in Leo X., who is as it were a Daniel in Babylon, and whose life has been on more than one occasion endangered by his innocence."

Reflecting on this controversy, we immediately observe how the field of strife was altered by the interference of Prierias. Hitherto the disputation had been confined to the abuse, or, in its utmost extent, to the use and nature of indulgences ; the authority of the church and the power of the pope had been noticed only collaterally, and with reference to that particular matter. Now the ground was enlarged, and that delicate and dangerous question at once thrown open to general argument. But this was not Luther's act. It was through the unseasonable obtrusiveness of Prierias, and the provoking rashness with which he exaggerated pretensions not yet contested, that the inquirer was invited to advance, and forced out of his own limited speculation into wider and loftier investigations.

We may remark, besides, that the very first principles

laid down in this his first controversial work were those which afterwards became the two great principles of the Reformation—I mean, freedom of individual inquiry, and the rejection of all authority but that of Scripture. But this proceeded from no foresight or premeditation on his part; he had then no design of reconstructing Christianity on those foundations. He simply placed them there, as the results of his own conviction and as antagonist principles to those of the Dominican. But, being once fixed, and by a bold hand, and maintained in the outset with much success, they were presently found to be so consistent with the best reason of man, and so flattering to his pride, as to rally round them an irresistible host of intelligent defenders.

That the name of Prierias may not again be obtruded on our attention, we shall here pursue this controversy to its termination. He published two short replies to Luther, which appear to have reached Germany in 1519. In these, so far was he from confining himself to a cautious and subtile confutation of his opponent's positions, that he broke forth into still greater violence and still more exorbitant assertions of the pontifical despotism. Luther was likewise roused beyond any bounds of moderation: "This book is so crammed with blasphemies from head to foot, that I should have thought it published by Satan himself in the midst of Tartarus If such is indeed the doctrine at Rome, and if it is thus taught with the knowledge of the pope and the cardinals (as I do not believe), then I do not hesitate to pronounce, from these writings, that the real Anti-Christ does sit in the temple of God, and reign in that purple-clad Rome, which is Babylon; and that the court of Rome is the synagogue of Satan. . . . Happy in that case are Greece and Bohemia, and all who have shaken off her yoke; and wretched indeed are those who continue in her commu-

nion”* But the less irrational writers even of the papal party condemned the indiscretion of Prierias; and in recompence for these untimely exhibitions of his zeal he was commanded to abstain from further controversy—a rebuke to which the “Master of the Palace” might not be very sensible, but which fell with some severity upon the “Censor of the Press;” for the judgment, which pronounced officially upon the publications of others, ought at least to have sufficed to preserve the works of him who executed it from the censure of his master.

To the Obelisks of Eck, Luther opposed, without at the moment publishing, some warm animadversions, under the title of Asterisks—“truths bright as the stars of heaven to the rust and dulness of the weapons of his adversary.” In this work he was not sparing in personal invective. He complained that his own arguments, derived from Scripture and the ancient fathers, had been met by no similar reasoning, but only by the mere naked fancies of the schools. But, while he re-asserted the fallibility of the pope, and maintained that the word of God alone was exempt from error, he advanced some doctrines of a more questionable character: That neither sacerdotal absolution nor satisfaction by works was necessary for the remission of sins; but that such remission was the consequence of the faith with which the sinner believes the words of Christ—“Whatsoever thou shalt loose shall be loosed:” that every sinner, even in a state of sin, must believe that his sins are remitted, and that before this belief there is no place for remission. . . . By these expressions, it became a question among his enemies and even among his friends, whether he had not abolished the necessity of repentance, and confounded

* See his Notes on the “Epitome” of Sylvester, and a Preface prefixed to them. Gerdes. t. i. § 90. Also Seckend. l. i. 15. xxxii.

the consequence and fruit of faith with that essential act of faith, whereby the believer appropriates the justice of Christ offered in his gospel.

It was a simple task to reply to the production of Hochstraten. In dealing with the mere inquisitor, the undisguised advocate of the sword and fagot, he had only to appeal to the first principles of justice and the first feelings of nature. "Avaunt, senseless murderer, thirsting for the blood of thy brethren ! It is my heart's wish that thou shouldst *not* call me Christian and faithful, but shouldst persist in proclaiming me heretic. . ." Yet, while he thus reproached the spirit of this persecutor, and exhorted him to proceed in that course which in the end would advance the holier cause, he professed to feel secure, in the magnanimity of the actual pontiff, that the inhuman counsel would not be followed.

The best commentary upon the controversies here related is that which was published by Erasmus several years afterwards, when he had altogether abandoned the cause of the Reformation. He addressed to a Spanish doctor of the Sorbonne the following concise sketch of the beginnings of Luther : " Martin proposed for disputation certain aphorisms concerning the papal indulgences. Some of those Ptochotyranni, who will venture anything in the hope of lucre, were preaching these no less impiously than impudently. To their indiscretions Luther opposed his Theses. Those interested in the thing were indignant. The Theses were sent to Leo. Sylvester Prierias replied to them with so much felicity, that the pontiff himself imposed silence on him. Then came the vociferations of certain monks, who clamoured to the people about nothing but heresies, blasphemies and schisms. I saw what I relate. Nothing could have raised so universal a prejudice in favour of Luther. But if the disputation about these indulgences had been taken up soberly,

as it was proposed, this pestilence would never thus have got possession of the world.”*

In the last remark alone Erasmus was in error, and that, through the character of his mind, more keen to detect a particular mistake than to comprehend a general principle. Though Prierias had held his peace, and his brother monks had been equally mute, the “pestilence” would still have descended. Its progress, under the hand of Providence, was indeed hastened by the intemperance of those Dominicans; but the causes from which it sprang were firmly fixed beyond the reach of any partial influences, and were pregnant with inevitable change.

* “Indignabantur quorum res agebatur. Missa sunt ad Leonem X. Respondit Sylvester Prierias tam feliciter, ut ipse Pontifex indixerit illi silentium. Successere monachorum quorundam vociferationes apud populum, nihil habentes in ore, præter hæreses, blasphemias et schismata. Visa narro. Nulla res magis conciliavit omnium favorem Luthero. Quod si de condonationibus sobrie, sicut erant propositæ, disputatum fuisset, nunquam hæc lues ita occupasset orbem.” *Lib. xix. Ep. 71.*

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER PROCEEDINGS OF LUTHER.

General assembly of the Augustinians at Heidelberg—Luther propounds and defends his paradoxes—account of this affair by Bucer—the subjects, Free Will and Aristotle—Luther then puts forth his solutions of his theses—his praises of Leo and abuse of Rome—he sends a copy with a letter to his diocesan—then to Staupitz, requesting him to forward them to the Pope—remarks on these two letters—also an epistle to Leo X.—substance of it—its great humility—the interference of the Pope was now inevitable—Luther's own self-reproaches in later life on the feebleness of these beginnings—how he was progressive in the acquisition of truth—In respect to his motives, they were unquestionably religious—Hostile calumnies; that he was prompted by personal ambition—his retort on Prierias—by love of personal distinction—by monastic jealousy—confuted by Pallavicino—by Frederiek's jealousy of the Elector of Brandenburg—unimportance of these charges, even had they been true—concluding remarks.

IN the spring of 1518 a general assembly of the Augustinian order was held at Heidelberg, and Luther was invited to attend it. So favourable an opportunity for diffusing his principles was not to be neglected. He determined to be present; and immediately after Easter, on the 13th of April, he set out on his journey on foot, and performed the greater part of it in that manner. The university of Heidelberg was held in high repute throughout the south and west of Germany, and any seeds which might be scattered there could scarcely fail to spread widely. The city was adorned by a palace of the Elector Palatine, in whose dominions it was placed, and who received the professor of Wittenberg with attention and hospitality. Staupitz likewise attended; he had even brought Luther from Würzburg in his

own conveyance, so that the latter presented himself before the learned assembly surrounded with every outward mark of respect. He availed himself of these circumstances, and lost no time in promulgating a number of propositions, which he undertook to maintain in public disputation on the 26th of April.

General curiosity, the singularity of the theses and the name of Luther, attracted large crowds not only of divines and students but of the higher class of citizens, and the attendants of the court. The heads of the university discountenanced this debate, by closing the hall appropriated to such purposes; but it was held within the walls of the Augustinian monastery. Luther's theses were forty in number, and he designated them, not altogether without justice, "Paradoxes." The first twenty-eight related to theology; the other twelve to philosophy. In the former he entered deeply into the mysteries of free will, grace, original sin, predestination. In the latter he treated with little ceremony the name and system of Aristotle. But what may seem singular, when we consider the ardour with which he was at that moment contending against one prominent practical abuse of Christian doctrine, he made no direct allusion, either in the one or in the other, to the subject of indulgences.

The following were among his paradoxes:—

1. The Law of God, though a very salutary rule of life, cannot advance a man towards righteousness, but is rather an obstacle.*

2. Still less can the works of men, operated by their natural strength, however frequently repeated, produce that effect.

3. The works of men, however specious and excellent

* "Lex Dei, saluberrima vita doctrina, non potest hominem ad justitiam promovere, sed magis obest."

they may appear without, are in all probability mortal sins.*

4. The works of God, however deformed and evil they may appear, are in truth immortal merits.

7. The works of the justified would be mortal sins, unless through a holy fear of God they were regarded with terror, as mortal sins, by the justified themselves.†

8. Much more are the works of men mortal sins, which are worked without any fear, in a mere false security.

9. To say that works done without Christ are indeed dead works, but not mortal sins, is a dangerous forgetfulness of the fear of God.

11. Presumption cannot be avoided nor true hope be present, unless the judgment of condemnation be feared in every act of life.

13. Free will after original sin is a mere name, and let it use all its exertions it can only sin mortally.

16. A man, who dreams that he can attain grace by doing all that is in his power, adds sin to sin, and is doubly guilty.‡

18. It is certain that a man ought to despair of himself altogether, that he may become fit for the reception of the grace of Christ.

21. The theologian of vanity calls evil good, and good evil. The theologian of the cross represents things as they are.

22. That wisdom, which discovers the invisible things

* “Opera hominum, ut semper sint speciosa bonaque videantur, probabile tamen est ea esse peccata mortalia.”

† “Justorum opera essent mortalia, nisi pio Dei timore ab ipsismet justis, ut mortalia, timerentur. Multo magis opera hominum sunt mortalia . . . &c. . . .”

‡ “Homo putans se ad gratiam velle pervenire faciendo quod in se est peccatum addit peccato, ut duplo reus fiat.”

of God from the understanding of His visible works, altogether inflates, blinds and hardens the heart.

23. The law works the wrath of God ; it kills, curses, accuses, judges, condemns whatsoever is not in Christ.

25. He is not justified who does many works ; but he who without any work has much faith in Christ.*

26. The law says, " Do this," and it is never done. Grace says, " Believe in Him," and all things are straightway performed.

28. God's love finds nothing in man, but creates in him what He loves. Man's love is created by what he loves.

29. He who would be wise in Aristotle, without danger, must before all things become foolish in Christ.

31. It was easy for Aristotle to imagine the world eternal, since in his mind the soul of man was mortal.

One of Luther's opponents, a young and zealous doctor named George Niger, doubtless while assailing the naked antinomianism of some of these paradoxes, broke out into the exclamation : " If the peasants could hear these assertions, they would certainly overwhelm us with stones and put an end to us." Luther, who relates this remark, mentions that it was received by the audience with general laughter. Yet it deserved more serious attention. It contained perhaps a more direct appeal to the common sense of that learned assembly than the arguments of more practised logicians. No doctrine which is not calculated to advance the morality of man, can, by any interpretation, be the doctrine of Christ. The unlettered naturally and justly suspect those propositions which attach to faith an importance so exclusive, as to omit all mention of the practical holiness proceeding from faith. And among the above paradoxes there are several,

* " Non ille justus est qui multum operatur ; sed qui sine opere multum credit in Christum."

which, if delivered without any comment to a congregation of honest rustics, would have sounded so like a direct discouragement to probity, as to shock their reason and offend the first and deepest principles of their piety.

“The other doctors,” says Luther, in the same letter, “received my disputation with readiness, and argued with so much modesty as to deserve my highest commendations. For though my theology seemed somewhat strange to them, yet they skirmished against it smartly and gallantly.” Among those present was a young Dominican, chaplain of the Elector Palatine, who took particular interest in the discussion. His name was Martin Bucer. He was a native of Alsace; and having entered at the age of sixteen into a monastery, he gave such promise of distinction, that the superiors sent him to study at Heidelberg. There he applied to Greek and Hebrew, as well as to the ordinary lectures on philosophy and theology; and he ventured besides to endanger his orthodoxy by much familiarity with the works of Erasmus. He was in his eight and twentieth year, when he assisted at this disputation; and he immediately wrote an account of it to a learned countryman, named Beatus Rhenanus, which is still extant.

Herein he related: “A theologian, though not of our university, had just been heard here, who treats with utter contempt all our sophistical and Aristotelian trifling, and decries as obsolete our rhetorical theologians, and addicts himself wholly to the Scriptures. This was Martinus, the famous flouter of indulgences, who has here maintained after the accustomed fashion, those paradoxes, which not only astonished all who heard them, but to most seemed even heretical. But what is there, in the name of Jesus, in true theology, which can possibly be approved by those, who apply Aristotle, like a touchstone, to every dogma in dispute? Yet not a hair’s breadth could our

prime disputants, with all their fallacies, drive this Martin Luther from his positions. Remarkable both for the mildness of his replies and the patience of his attention, he exhibited in the solution of difficulties the acumen of Paul rather than of Scotus ; so concise were his answers, so much to the point, so readily borrowed from the storehouse of the sacred oracles. He was the admiration of all. On the day following, I had a familiar and friendly conversation with him, at a supper, not adorned by dishes, but by doctrines ; and he explained to me with perspicuity everything that I asked him. He agrees in all respects with Erasmus,* but surpasses him in this, that what the latter insinuates only, he openly and freely teaches. Oh ! that I had time to write more to you. At Wittenberg, however, he has effected this—that those trivial authors are altogether exploded, and Greek literature, Jerome, Augustine and Paul, are taught publicly.” After enumerating several of the arguments by which Luther defended the paradoxes, and which he had noted down during the debate, he concluded by solemnly conjuring Rhenanus not to communicate his letter to any except friends, lest it should bring some evil on his head.

We perceive from this, that Luther gained at least one zealous admirer and disciple by his exhibition at Heidelberg, and that one, a man of talents and learning and enthusiasm, well suited at the proper season to co-operate, as with great effect he did, in the work now commencing.

* “Cum Erasmo illi conveniunt omnia, quin uno hoc præstare videtur, quod quæ ille duntaxat insinuat, hic aperte docet et libere. Oh utinam mihi tempus esset de hoc tibi scribere plura ! Is effecit ut Wittenbergæ triviales isti auctores sint ad unum explosi omnes, Græcicæ literæ, Hieronymus, Augustinus, Paulus publice doceantur.” *Mart. Bucer ad B. Rhenanum Relatio Historica*, &c., apud Gerdesium, Monument. Antiq. Tom. i. No. xviii.

Two others, students in the university, named Brentz and Snepf, adopted at the same time the doctrines of Luther, and endeavoured, as far as circumstances would permit, to diffuse them; and these two became afterwards his faithful fellow-labourers. So that this disputation, though it did not so much as touch on the question then at issue between him and the high Roman party, though it connected him with opinions unpalatable to the larger portion of those who heard them, yet prepared in some measure the way for all that followed. He appeared in it, not as the assailant of any practical abuse, not as the introducer of mere intellectual improvements, but as the advocate of the Scriptures and of the doctrines which he supposed to be derived from them, in contempt of scholastic commentaries and papal interpretation. And this was no small part of the Reformation.

Immediately after his return from Heidelberg he resumed the suspended controversy with fresh ardour. Some "Solutions," which he had previously composed, of his theses respecting indulgences,* he now presented to certain distinguished individuals. In this more elaborate composition he argued the great questions of faith in the merits of Christ, and penitence, as apparent in perpetual moral amendment, with so great earnestness and even moderation, as to conciliate many whose opinions were yet undecided. He expressed his wonted reverence for the ministerial office of the priesthood and the jurisdiction of the pope; but at the same time he restricted the latter by the authority of Scripture on the one hand, and of general councils on the other. In respect to the existing pope, he represented him as a being of surpassing excellence,

* "Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute ad Leonem X. pontificem."

whose integrity and erudition were the delight of all who heard speak of him—"Yet, (he continued) what can this most refined man effect alone amidst such utter confusion?*" He deserves, indeed, to have reigned in a better age, or that the age of his reign should have been less corrupt. We are worthy of our own generation. We merit no pontiffs but such as Julius II. or Alexander VI., or any other atrocious Mezentii, such as poets fable; since good men are now derided even at Rome itself, or rather most of all, at Rome. For there is no place in christendom in which even the sovereign pontiffs are more licentiously scoffed at, than in that very Babylon, Rome. But, enough of this."

Yet, with all his admiration for the supposed personal qualities of Leo, Luther at once rejected his claim to infallibility. "The pope is human like the rest of us; and there have been many popes who have loved, not only errors and vice, but even prodigies of vice. I obey the pope as pope; that is, as the interpreter of the canons and the councils, but not when he speaks from himself alone; lest I should be compelled, like some who understand not Christ, to extol the horrible massacres perpetrated by Julius II. on a Christian people, as so many blessings conferred by a pious pastor on the flock of Christ." He likewise rejected in the strongest terms the doctrine, which invested his spiritual master with the temporal sword. "It is very true that the pope holds a sword of iron, and thus presents himself to Christians, not as a tender father, but as a fearful tyrant. Alas! God in his wrath has given us the sword we preferred,

* "Sed quid ille suavissimus homo potest unus in tanta rerum confusione? dignus profecto qui melioribus temporibus pontificaretur, aut meliora tempora essent sui pontificatus. Nostro seculo digni sumus; pontificari nonnisi Julios II. Alexandros VI.; aut siquos alios atroces Mezentios, ut finxerunt poetæ . . ."

and withdrawn that which we despised . . .” He spoke too of the many abuses which vitiated the ecclesiastical system, and of the heavy burdens by which the faithful were oppressed; and among these he enumerated the multitude of feasts and fasts, the canonical hours, the prohibitions and restrictions as to particular articles of food and clothing on particular days. “I will speak out shortly and boldly. The church requires to be reformed; and this is a work, not for one man, as the pope, nor for several, as the cardinals and fathers in council, but for the whole world—nay, I should rather say it is a work pertaining to God alone. As to the time when such reformation shall commence, He only knows it who has appointed all times. The barriers are overthrown, and we can restrain the deluge no longer, even if we would.” Yet, with all this, he confidently maintained the existence of purgatory, and severely censured the Bohemian schismatics who questioned it. And he particularly urged, that his other positions were advanced only in doubt and search after truth, and that it was his humble prayer to be instructed. “If I am in error, let him who has the power recal me.”

As to the opinions, expressed in these Solutions, about papal authority and ecclesiastical abuses, I shall only here remark, that they were not new; that they had been already and frequently propounded, not by humble priests only, or factious laymen, but by some of the highest dignitaries and wisest friends of the church. However, as they embraced more topics, and topics of more importance, than the theses which they professed to illustrate, they marked to the same extent a progress in the views and actions of the writer.

First of all, in the proper spirit of professional subordination, he sent a copy of his resolutions to the Bishop of Brandenburg; and he recommended it by a very

respectful, and if not artful, at least very prudent letter, dated May 22, 1518.

“It is now some time since a new and unheard-of doctrine concerning indulgences began to be preached in this neighbourhood. The learned and unlearned were alike perplexed by it; and many requested me to declare publicly my opinion of the novelty, not to say impudence, of this doctrine. At first I remained silent and neutral, but presently the matter went so far, that the sanctity of the pope himself was compromised. What could I do? It was not for me either to approve or condemn those doctrines; so I opened a discussion on the subject till such time as the church should pronounce upon it. No one accepted my challenge; my theses were treated, not as questions for debate, but as dogmatical assertions; and thus am I compelled to put forth an explanation of them. Deign, therefore, to accept these poor trifles which I offer you, most merciful bishop. There are many among these positions on which I have doubts, not a few on which I am ignorant, even some which I deny,* none which I assert with pertinacity; but I submit them all to the holy church and to its decision . . .” To this he added, that the menaces of his enemies were far from giving him any alarm; that it was only the want of discretion and shame in them which occasioned his actual notoriety, and that his own inclination was, to immure himself in his cell and pursue his solitary meditations. This last assertion seems to prove that, whatever progress he may have made in other studies, he was yet very little advanced in that particular knowledge so very essential to a public character—the knowledge of himself.

* “Inter quæ sunt de quibus dubito, nonnulla ignoro, aliqua et nego, nulla vero pertinaciter assero; sed omnia Ecclesiæ Sanctæ suoque iudicio submitto.”

Eight days afterwards, on Trinity Sunday, he sent the same Solutions to Staupitz, accompanied by a letter, in which he requested his patron to forward them to the pope. It was in this composition that he ascribed his conversion to the true evangelical doctrine, as has been already related, to the penetrating words of Staupitz. And then he proceeded to say, that he had thence inferred the error of those who ascribed so much to works of penitence to heartless satisfactions and laborious confessions; that, with these convictions, he could not fail to be moved when he saw the true doctrine of penitence entirely neglected, and satisfaction, which was the meanest part of it, and indulgences as the remission of this meanest part, extolled with extravagance; that he had therefore determined to offer a temperate opposition to the excess of those preachers, however reluctant to be drawn forth from his obscurity and made a spectacle to the world.

“I wish to declare, however, that I have thus acted at my own peril only. Christ will see to it, and make it clear whether my words be from Him, or from me—Christ, without whose permission the tongue of the pope has no power to move, nor the hearts of kings to decree. “For those who threaten me I have no answer but that of Reuchlin—‘He who is poor fears nothing, for he can lose nothing.’ I have neither goods nor gold, nor any want of either. There is nothing for my persecutors but a feeble body, worn out by care and labour. And if they shall deprive me of that, they will rob me only of a few short hours. But sufficient for me is my beloved Redeemer and Propitiator, my Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I will sing praises so long as I have breath.”

It will be observed, that the motives, which he assigned in this letter for his first attack on the indulgence, are

altogether different from those, for which he took credit in his letter to his ordinary. With the prelate it was the novelty of the doctrine, the fear of some compromise of the apostolical sanctity. With the pious Augustinian, it was the depth and sincerity of his evangelical convictions. With the former, it was the church; with the latter, it was the bible. Meanwhile, though this may look like inconsistency, he was honest in both; for he yet loved his church as well as his bible, and he had not yet discovered how hardly they could be reconciled. That he had the address to adapt his correspondence to the characters and positions of those whom he wished to propitiate, provided he committed no violation of truth by this pliancy, was not only no reproach to him, but it was an art without which he would have been ill qualified for the very difficult office to which providence had called him.

On the same day he addressed an epistle together with the Solutions to Leo X. His object in this bold measure was to remove the prejudices existing at Rome against him. "I hear, most Holy Father, that my name is in ill favour with your holiness; that I am called heretic, apostate, traitor, with a thousand similar appellations. I am surprised by what I see, and alarmed by what I hear; but the foundation of my quiet remains unmoved—a pure and peaceful conscience. Deign to listen to me, who am but a child, and stand in need of instruction." He then related the excesses perpetrated by the preachers of indulgences, and the evil effects produced by them on the fidelity of the people—the avarice of the priests, the power of the keys, the authority of the pope himself were assailed in all the taverns throughout all Germany. His zeal was roused for the glory of Christ; his young and warm blood boiled in his veins. Then, rude and speechless as he was, he

thought fit to make known those excesses to certain magnates of the church, of whom some neglected and some derided him. Then he resolved to offer a moderate resistance to the preachers, and to call their dogmas into disputation for the instruction of the more learned classes—a privilege which his doctor's degree conferred on him, which was commonly exercised on important questions.

“What fate is this that presses forward these disputations of mine before all the other positions of all other doctors, so that they have gone forth into almost every quarter of the globe? This is to me a miracle. I marvel, I say, how these theses, published only for the instruction and advantage of those about me, and not even comprehensible to all, should have thus found their way everywhere. For they are not doctrines, not dogmas, theses only; and those, put forth obscurely and enigmatically, so that, had I foreseen their circulation, I could have made them much more intelligible. But now, since they can neither be recalled nor altered, I deeply deplore that I, unlearned as I am and as stupid in intellect as destitute of erudition, should be thrust forward to cackle, in an age so full of eloquence, that even the ambitious Cicero, were he now alive, would scarce emerge from obscurity.

“To the end then that I may both appease my adversaries and comply with the wishes of my friends, I send you these mere trifles, things explanatory of my theses, that I may be safer under the shelter of the pontifical name and the shadow of its protection. All who wish it may now see with what pure simplicity I court and reverence the authority of the church and the sanctity of the keys. For if I were such as some represent me, if I had really violated the privilege of public disputation, it could not be that the most illustrious prince,

Frederic of Saxony, Elector of the empire, would permit such a pestilence in his university ; since of all men living he is most attached to the catholic and apostolical truth.

“Prostrate at thy feet, most blessed Father, I offer myself with all that I am and have. Give me life or death ; call or recal, approve or reprove me as seemeth best to thee. I shall recognise thy voice as the voice of Christ speaking in thee ; and if I have deserved death I will not refuse to die. The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof. May He be praised for ever and ever ! May He uphold thee to all eternity !”

This proceeding of Luther was an important step in the work which he had undertaken. Hitherto the controversy might have been deemed beneath the attention of the pope ; now his interference was inevitable. The policy of the act is liable to question. It was the obvious interest of the reformer to put off as long as possible any direct interposition on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities. All his hopes of success were placed in the people. Unless the multitudes could be moved to support this cause, righteous as it was, it could not stand ; and to this end, both for the spreading and confirming of the new principles, nothing was required so much as time. His adversaries perceived this, or at least acted as if they perceived it, for not a moment was lost by them. They were loud and urgent in their clamours. They assaulted the Holy see with the most violent representations of the heresy. They cried out for the blood of the offender in such vindictive tones, that he began to tremble, and not altogether without reason, for his personal safety. Under this feeling he took the most direct, if not the wisest course. He determined to refute the calumny and so obviate the danger. And in this hope he spontaneously proffered to the tribunal,

before which he was not yet summoned, such an exposition of his real opinions, as might prove their innocence and his own fidelity. And his conscience gave him no cause to distrust the success of such an appeal, since he still nourished the deepest reverence for the see, still professed unbounded obedience to the ordinances of the church.

With what eye he looked back in the decline of life upon these his faint beginnings—with what a blush of self-reproach he regarded, in the maturity of his principles and the certainty of their triumph, the trepidations of his earliest essays, will be best exhibited in his own nervous language. Seventeen years afterwards he republished all his propositions,* with a Latin preface, in which he characterised as follows the acts which we have just related :

“By these propositions was exposed my utter shame, by which I mean the infirmity and ignorance which caused me to set about my work so fearfully and tremblingly. I was alone, and had fallen into it without forethought ; and, when I found that I could not retreat, I not only conceded to the pope many articles of importance, but I offered him my gratuitous adoration. For, indeed, what was I then ? a poor miserable little monk, more like a corpse than a man ! for me to march against the majesty of the pontiff—of him whose nod was terrible, not only to the princes of the earth, but, if I may so say, to heaven and to hell ! In what straits my soul was confined during the first and the following year ; to what submissions, by no means feigned or false, I descended ; nay, in what despair I was all but involved,

* It was, more accurately, Melancthon who republished them, though Luther sanctioned the work by his preface. “*Propositiones D. M. L. ab initio negotii evangelici ab auctore tractatæ usque in hunc diem. A.D. 1538.*”

can be little conceived by those who now in the security of my triumph assail the wounded pontifical majesty with much arrogance, and wear the laurels which they did not earn, but which I am very far from grudging them.*

“ I was then ignorant of much which by the grace of God I now know. As to indulgences, I knew absolutely nothing about them, nor was the whole papacy any wiser. I was fond of discussion and desirous to learn. And as I failed to find in the books of the theologians and canonists anything to satisfy my thirst, I wished to take counsel of the church itself. There were pious men to whom my propositions gave great delight; but these were not the authorities of the church, the Pope, the cardinals, the bishops, the theologians, the jurists, the monks. These were the men to whom I looked with reverence, these were they from whom I expected inspiration. For so bloated was I with the crapulous drunkenness of their doctrine, that I seemed neither to be sleeping nor awake.† And then, after I had solved all objections by scriptural evidence, there still remained the final and single argument, ‘Hear the church.’ Here was my severest struggle, here my greatest difficulties; but at length I did, notwithstanding, overcome this obstacle through the grace of Christ. Indeed I had at that time a much stronger reverence for the pontifical church and a much deeper conviction that it was the true church, than those perverse men who are now so loudly extolling it in opposition to me.”

Then, after complaining of the harshness of Gaictan,

* “Cum non fecissent hos versiculos tulerunt tamen honores; quos tamen illis libenter favebam.”

† “Papam, Cardinales . . . suspiciebam et ex his spiritum expectabam. Ita enim crapula et ebrietate doctrinæ ipsorum eram distentus, ut nec me dormientem, nec vigilantem sentirem . . .”

in refusing his offer of a conditional silence, he proceeded : “ But these my infirmities and follies I confess to you, my very good brother, that you too may learn to be wise with humility, in the certain and positive knowledge that Satan is not yet dead, but on the contrary the prince of every tract and province of the whole world ; and that no living thing is exempt from his power, craft and malice, except Christ alone, and those who are truly Christ’s.

“ Here you see, if I may venture at least on this boast, from how much weakness the Lord has advanced me to virtue ; from how much ignorance to knowledge ; from how much terror to fortitude ;—yet certainly not without agonies and temptations, as certain forward and joyous little writers presume.”

Luther published this statement in the decay of his bodily frame ; in the expectation of no distant separation from all the interests of this life ; with no one remaining object which could tempt him to deceive either others or himself. We are therefore bound to treat it with perfect respect ; and since it is not at variance with any of his recorded acts or expressions, and in strict agreement with many, we may accept it as a faithful commentary on his earliest proceedings.

“ I tell you these things, good reader,* that in perusing my works you may bear this in mind : I am one of those among whom Augustine has classed himself—of those who have gradually progressed by writing and teaching ; not of those who at a single bound spring to perfection out of nothing.” The force of this declaration will be better understood when we shall be farther advanced in this history. But we have already found some proof of its truth in the long struggles through

* *Præfatio Operum.*

which the doctrine of justification gradually gained possession of his mind. We have observed besides how early began his distrust in Aristotle, while it required some years to ripen it into absolute contempt. We have seen, even when Aristotle was rejected, how closely he still clung to the authority of the church, how absolutely he acquiesced in all that it had positively defined. And even in the controversy about indulgences we have perceived him advancing step by step from narrower to wider ground, even as the passionate indiscretion of his adversaries tempted him on. Assuredly, this graduality in his progress was greatly instrumental towards success, and produced all the effects of the finest policy, because it enabled ordinary minds to follow him, and led even the timid insensibly into changes from which any violent outbreak would have deterred them. Yet was this no result of design on his part, but only the consequence of the inward struggles of an earnest mind which panted for freedom, but no less for truth, and which was breaking link by link the prejudices of a tyrannical education.

Such then is the simple narrative of the events with which the Reformation began; such the part assigned to Luther in their accomplishment; and such the principles by which alone he appears to have been guided. Of course he has not escaped the imputation of unworthy motives. It is invariably the part of those, who league together for the support of any evil, to cast suspicion on the secret designs of their adversaries. Conscious of that strong sense of personal interest, which alone cements their own conspiracy, they will or can imagine no nobler incentive for the actions of others, and so ascribe them to passions akin to their own. Be the actions never so free from fault, be the abuses which it is sought to remove never so flagrant and revolting, still there must be some personal object, some selfish purpose lurking in

the bosom of the reformer. And thus the defenders of corruption become through this very tendency the slanderers of human nature, since it is their interest to reduce the standard of honour and morality, and their policy to represent that standard as lower than indeed it is.

Accordingly, we find it imputed to Luther by the Roman Catholic historians, that he was actuated by personal ambition; that he was the mere tool of Stau-pitz for fomenting jealousy against a rival Order, in possession of a lucrative traffic; that he was the instrument of some malice which the Elector of Saxony is supposed to have conceived against the Archbishop of Mayence. We need not enter into any details of facts or arguments to disprove these calumnies, partly because they are grown almost obsolete, partly because they are best disproved by the circumstances related in the preceding pages. In respect to the first, however, we may here mention the retort of Luther to a flippant insinuation advanced by Prierias in his ‘Dialogue:’—“If you, Luther, had received a good bishopric from our lord the Pope, with a plenary indulgence for the repairs of your church, perhaps you would have used softer expressions; nay, you might even have praised the pardons from which you now detract.” “Perhaps,” replied Luther, “you judge me from your own conscience, which I believe the rather because you are so smooth a flatterer. If I aspired to a bishopric, I certainly should not utter those things which you hear with so much impatience. Think you that I am ignorant by what means church dignities are obtained at Rome, where the very children are ever and anon singing in the streets, ‘*Denique nunc rerum facta est fœdissima Roma?*’ ‘The most loathsome of all existing things is Rome.’” The path which Luther chose would indeed, in a somewhat

earlier age, have conducted him to the honours of a martyr, but it was not likely to recommend him in any age to the favour of a corrupt hierarchy.

The mere love of personal distinction is easily imputed as a motive to any man who has acquired distinction. It is, besides, the commonest of all motives. Yet is there no particular reason to ascribe it to Luther. The records of his early life produce the opposite conviction. We observe him troubled, in the retirement of his convent, by inward struggles, of a character purely religious, and especially characterised by their earnestness. We remark besides that the very questions on which these "temptations" turned, Penitence and Justification, became afterwards the foundation of his hostility to indulgences. For years they had engrossed his deepest feelings, and they would have supplied a motive for opposition to the practice, even if the frauds and blasphemies of Tetzl had not been superadded to inflame them.

That the Augustinian monks, and Luther as their organ, resented the preference given to the Dominicans in the barter of these indulgences, has been asserted or insinuated by writers not altogether unfavourable to the Reformation. But, in the first place, it may well be questioned whether this was a very enviable privilege; whether the Order gained any glory by it; and even whether the portion of the mere profit which remained with the preachers was a sufficient compensation for the labour and the odium. And any impartial reader, who has taken the pains to examine the mind of Luther, will at once perceive that his at least was not the hand which would have lent itself to so paltry an object. In the next place, there is not any expression in any of his writings, nor in those of any of his contemporaries, which gives the slightest countenance to the charge; nor indeed was there anything in the particular circumstances to call

forth any such jealousy. Lastly, there is the direct authority of Pallavicino to the contrary. “It is not true” (says that very anti-Lutheran historian*) “that it had been usual to impose that office on the Augustinians. Julius imposed it on the Franciscans; and in like manner Leo united a guardian of the Franciscans in the commission with the Archbishop of Mayence, dated on the last day of March 1515. A little earlier the Teutonic knights had employed the Dominicans for the promulgation of similar indulgences, which were granted them on the ground of the Turkish war.”

We may thus dismiss as unfounded, and for many reasons improbable, the second imputation. The third—that Luther was the mere agent of the jealousy of his prince—is equally unsupported by any historical evidence, and will be confuted by the course of events as I shall presently describe them. But, after all, of what serious importance is it whether these and such-like imputations be true or false? The temple which was built had not been the less holy, though the hands which founded it had been really degraded by servility or selfishness. It is not thus that lofty questions can be degraded, or mighty truths confounded. The abominations of Rome had not been the less intolerable, even had Luther secretly sighed for a throne among her hierarchy; nor would the blasphemies of Tetzels have lost any part of their impiety, though monks or princes had grudged him the richness of the spoil. When the Almighty brings about those great revolutions, which alter the principles of human government and the foundations of human happiness, the personal qualities of the puny mortals whom He deigns to employ as His temporary agents are as nothing when compared to the magnificence of His

* Lib. i. c. 3, § 7, fol. 6.

design. They perform their appointed offices, and pass away upon their destined journey; while the monument which they have helped to raise endures through distant ages, partaking in the constancy of His nature, not in the impotence of our mortality.

And if in these our minute and perishable histories we dwell, as we must dwell, upon the characters of those agents; if we attach importance to their smallest acts or most distant intentions; if we search with curious diligence their writings, their speeches, and weigh the very expressions of their private conversation; and if we magnify and give great consequence to all these matters, it is that we are men, and address ourselves to men; we scrutinise the instruments before our eyes, we overlook the invisible hand that made them; we strive with all our might to comprehend the involutions of the machinery, without always regarding the Power which gives to it its motion and its object. And though some are indeed so sagacious as to perceive that it is the operation of general principles, rather than of individual qualities, which brings these great and permanent changes to pass; that the chiefs and champions who get the credit of them are only those who float most boldly on the tide, those who strive to direct the everlasting current—which, whether they directed it or not, would still flow onwards in the same or a somewhat similar channel, from generation to generation—yet even these are apt sometimes to forget that those very principles, which appear thus to control things here below, are no more than a partial revelation of the great inscrutable code which God has prescribed to Himself for the government of His universe.

CHAPTER VI.

LUTHER AT AUGSBURG.

Character of Leo X., literary, polished, and profligate—he despised the first proceedings of Luther—letter of Cardinal Raphael to the Elector of Saxony—reply of the latter—Luther preaches on excommunication—his citation to Rome—two letters of the university of Wittenberg to Miltitz and to the Pope—the Elector obtains the removal of his trial from Rome to Augsburg—The commission to the Legate gives him full power of excommunication and interdict against all Luther's supporters—character of the Legate Gajetan—his connexion with Julius II.—subjects of discussion at the Diet of Augsburg—the Emperor Maximilian—his opinion of Popes, and his general character—Frederick's political character—Erasmus on Frederick—his policy in respect to Luther—Luther arrives at Augsburg—the Diet is over—an unfavourable circumstance—his conversation with Serra Longa—he obtains a safe conduct from the Emperor—his reception at Augsburg—Luther's first appearance before the Legate—the three demands of the Legate—two errors charged against Luther—A sharp debate—remarks—the opposite principles of the two parties—Staupitz releases Luther from his monastic vow of obedience—his second appearance before the Legate—he reads a protest, and obtains permission to make a written reply—In his third conference he reads the defence—a dispute on the Extravagant of Clement follows, and Luther is dismissed—Staupitz and Link successively mediate in vain—then Luther writes a humble letter to the Legate—and then, receiving no answer, he takes his private departure from Augsburg—his letter to Gajetan announcing this intention—his appeal from the Pope ill-informed to the Pope when he shall be better informed.

THE personal praises which Luther had more than once offered to the reigning pontiff, at the expense not only of the worst of his predecessors, but also of the city where he resided and of the system which he administered, were not altogether undeserved. They wear in-

deed in our eyes the semblance of flattery ; yet they may not really have been written in that spirit. A zealous member and minister of the church, a professor young and ardent, of great genius and some classical attainments, of much ingenuousness and unsullied moral purity, removed by a distant residence from any minute acquaintance with the mysteries of the Vatican, may indeed have been dazzled by the reputation of a learned Pope ; and either believed the report, or imagined the existence, of those virtues which, as he might think, were naturally associated with literary accomplishments.

Leo X. possessed a liberal and in some respects an enlarged mind. He had a sort of passion for the writings of the ancients, and was tolerably conversant with some, especially the lighter, among them. He was at least a fervent patron of learning ; he used his authority to extend its influence, by express exhortations to the ruling powers, both in Germany and Denmark ; and he vouchsafed his especial favour to Erasmus, Bembo, Sadoletus and others, the most distinguished in the rest of Europe. He might not foresee, or he might not fear, the necessary action of any general diffusion of light, to the detriment of the papal authority ; he might consider this as a distant contingency ; or he might imagine that learning under every shape would ever be found defending the church and its abuses. At any rate, his ardour in this cause gave to it an impulse for which humanity has good reason to thank him. Even the age in which he lived was not so blind as to refuse him its admiration for that merit, which in him shone forth the more brightly as contrasted with the ferocious habits of his military predecessor.

His court was magnificent, refined, and luxurious ; his talents, naturally great, were sharpened by early experience of men and business ; and his civil policy certainly

indicated a much larger and firmer mind than usually directed the councils of the Vatican. His manners were polished and affable, and even in morals he was free from one of the vices which haunted the apostolical See—avarice. But in other respects he was scarcely less worldly than the worst among his departed brothers. He was as keenly bent on the aggrandisement of his family as the greediest nepotist among them. He heaped upon his obscure, if not worthless, relatives the funds collected for far other purposes, and he omitted no expedient of extortion or imposture to swell those funds. If he had some profane learning, he was entirely destitute, as his warmest admirers lament, of all theological and even ecclesiastical erudition. If he had some brilliancy of wit, it was for the most part wasted in levity, or dishonoured by the subjects to which he applied it. The fruits of his rapacity were dissipated by his profusion; yet his profusion was not the greatest of his failings, for he was as dead to the spirit, as he was ignorant of the letter, of his religion; and among his courtiers he did not discourage the scarcely disguised profession of infidelity. He gave them at the same time an example of luxurious impurity; and though it should be true, as his panegyrist* has asserted, that his vices flowed from the joyousness of a mild and easy disposition and a certain royal licentiousness, rather than from the deliberate choice of a depraved mind, yet is this but a preposterous excuse for the debaucheries of the representative of Christ. In fact, if the prestige of the name of Leo could be thrown aside, it would be difficult to imagine any morals more

* “*Has præclaras liberalis excelsique animi virtutes cum nimia sæpe vitæ luxuria tum objectæ libidines obscurabant; ita tamen ut jucunditate blandæ facilisque naturæ potius ac regia quadam licentia, quam certo depravati animi judicio in ea vitia prolabi videretur.*” *Paul. Jovius. Vita Leonis*, p. 188.

antichristian than those of himself and his court, had not the world already witnessed the deeds of Innocent, Alexander and Julius.

I have mentioned that this Pope treated the first reports of Luther's insubordination with indifference or contempt. He regarded it as one of those harmless clouds which were perpetually rising in the ecclesiastical horizon, and which, after some faint explosion, perpetually rolled away and dispersed themselves in peace. He knew nothing of the character of the insurgent; he knew nothing of the German people; he saw the affair from a distance, and he was not hasty to compromise the pontifical dignity by interference in so small a matter. However, as the controversy proceeded, the counsels of the more violent enemies of Luther began to prevail at the Vatican. The earliest proof that I have found of any movement on the part of Leo is in a letter from Cardinal Raphael di Rovera to the Elector of Saxony, dated on the 3rd of April (1518), but not received till the 7th of the July following. It was written in the Pope's name, and, while it praised the hitherto untainted loyalty of Frederick, it exhorted him to be the more careful not to sully that fair fame by protecting a suspected subject.

Frederick was still very sensitive on that point and very proud of his fidelity; yet was he far too wary, far too suspicious of the pontifical policy, to commit his faith by any inconsiderate engagement. Almost a month afterwards, on the 5th of August, he calmly replied: That it would ever be his desire to remain submissive to the holy Catholic church, which had no more faithful son than himself, nor one more averse from heresy and rebellion; that for this reason he had never defended either the writings or sermons of Luther; that the latter had always professed himself ready to appear, under a safe-conduct, at any time, before any tribunal of pious, learned,

Christian and impartial judges—and, if he should fail to sustain his doctrine by arguments drawn from scripture, to submit entirely to their decision. This was cautious and respectful; yet was it not the answer of an abject adherent, nor one altogether flattering to the unlimited pretensions of the Roman See.

Three weeks earlier, on July 15, Luther, probably moved either by some rumours or some forebodings of an approaching storm, and perhaps expecting the worst at once, preached from his pulpit at Wittenberg a sermon on the subject of excommunication. Herein he laboured to establish a distinction between inward and outward excommunications. He argued that, while the former did indeed separate the soul from the communion of God, the latter only separated the body from the ceremonies of the church; that the former separation could be effected by no human power; and that he who died under an unjust sentence of excommunication was even blessed, since he suffered for righteousness' sake, and thus secured his everlasting reward.

Presently the bolt did fall, but not in its most fearful shape. On the 7th of August Luther received a brief of citation which summoned him to appear at Rome within sixty days, to answer to the charge of heresy. Now the contest changed its character. It was not now a "squabble between monks;" it was no longer a debate among theologians—an affair in which the great might be mere spectators, looking on with curiosity and even interest, but not sharing in the strife; that moment was passed, and other combinations were to follow. Meanwhile this measure of Leo was considered as a triumph by the high papal party, because the first step in these matters is always the most important, as unavoidably leading to others in case it prove inefficient.

As if it had been necessary to proclaim to the world

that the trial to which Luther was summoned was intended to be a mere mockery of justice, it was made known (not very prudently on the part of the Pope or his advisers) that his antagonist Prierias was to preside at the tribunal. This fact alone conveyed along with the summons the sentence; it became therefore necessary for the culprit and his friends to discover some expedient for evasion. A great sensation was of course produced at Wittemberg. The members of the university, who for the most part shared his opinions, who admired his talents and respected his character, and at the same time felt their academical honour compromised in his person, addressed a direct solicitation to the Pope in his behalf. They urged the weakness of his health, the dangers of the journey, the difficulty, the impossibility of obedience. "We feel pity for his distress and his supplications. As submissive children, we entreat you to regard him as unpolluted by any doctrines opposed to those of the Roman church." On the same day they addressed to Charles Miltitz, a Saxon gentleman who happened to be the Pope's chamberlain, a stronger and more confidential expression of their feelings. In this appeal they ventured to pronounce a very high eulogy on the genius, learning and irreproachable morals of their professor, while they tried to move the national prejudices of their compatriot. "Render this service to your native land, and let it be seen that a German never forsakes his fellow-countrymen."

While the university was thus endeavouring to soften the Pope, Luther, through the medium of his correspondent, Spalatin, made two propositions, with perfect humility, to the Elector. The first was that the latter would be pleased to urge such immediate representations at Rome as might occasion a change in the place of his trial; so that it should not be conducted in the midst of

his enemies and under their very control, but before some less partial judge, in some city of Germany. The other, which he suggested about a fortnight afterwards,* was to this effect: That Luther should apply for a safe-conduct to Frederick, as if desirous to proceed to Rome; that this should be refused; and that he should employ this refusal as a pretext for disobeying the summons. In respect to his latter proposal, we perceive in it an attempt to compromise the Elector in his cause, which was in itself indeed natural and excusable, though perhaps scarcely consistent with some subsequent declarations on that subject which will be mentioned in their place.

Frederick acceded to the former application; and the Pope, willing to oblige that respectable prince, and finding that his Legate in Germany was desirous to undertake the duty of suppressing the feud, issued a commission placing the decision of the cause in the hands of that ecclesiastic. On the 23rd of August he addressed two letters announcing that resolution, one to the Elector, the other to the Legate. The former was written much in the same spirit with that before mentioned of Cardinal Raphael. The Elector was reminded of the dignity and virtues of his family, and of the devotion of his ancestors to the Christian faith and the Holy See. Luther was next denounced as a child of iniquity, a despiser of God, a man false to his profession of humility and obedience, wicked, rash and presumptuous, and yet daring to avow that he placed his hopes of impunity in the protection of his sovereign. Frederick was then exhorted to be jealous of his honour as a Christian prince, and of the reputation of his family; to repel this calumny by his acts; and to

* The first (No. 74) letter was of August 8; the second (No. 75) of August 21. In the second we find some strong declarations of orthodoxy: "*Hæreticus nunquam ero; errare disputando possum, sed statuere nihil volo, porro nec opinionibus hominum captivus fieri. . . .*"

clear himself from the very suspicion of the guilt with which the monk had charged him. To this effect, after the usual professions of the apostolical justice towards the innocent and clemency towards the penitent, he was desired to deliver up Luther into the power of the Legate ; “lest pious people of these or after times should one day lament and say, The most dangerous heresy that ever afflicted the church of God arose through the assistance of that noble and worthy family.”

The commission to the Legate, as addressed to the appointed judge of the controversy, is a curious evidence of the sort of justice which he was intended to administer to his prisoner. It announced to him that the said Luther had already been condemned and declared a heretic, and therefore commanded him to secure his person, to force and compel him by the arm of power, and to keep him in faithful custody till he could be brought before the Pope himself. If indeed the offender should freely retract and submit, then he might be restored to the unity of the church. But should he persist in his disobedience, and should it be found impossible to seize his person, “then let him be proscribed and excommunicated in all parts of Germany, and along with him all who are attached to him. And for the easier extinction of this pestilence you will excommunicate all the prelates, religious orders, universities, communities, counts, dukes and potentates, the Emperor Maximilian excepted, who shall neglect to seize the aforesaid Luther and all his adherents, and send them to you under safe custody. And if, which God forbid, the aforesaid princes, communities, universities, potentates, or any one belonging to them, should shelter the said Martin and his adherents, or give him publicly or secretly, directly or indirectly, assistance and advice, we lay an interdict on these princes, &c., with their towns, boroughs, countries

and villages, as well as on those places where the said Martin shall take refuge, so long as he shall remain there, and three days after he shall have quitted the same." By this important document the Legate was armed with all the powers of vengeance belonging to the See. On the failure of remonstrance, exhortation, influence, he was directed to proceed to excommunication; and should even this prove insufficient, he was commanded to have recourse to the last and most dreaded instrument of apostolical warfare—the most dangerous experiment on the credulous patience of mankind—the interdict. These instructions were of course confined to Germany, the country to which he was accredited; but we shall presently see that even in Germany it was not thought very safe to attempt to enforce them.

The ecclesiastic to whom this commission was addressed was Thomas di Vio, Cardinal of St. Sixtus. He was born in 1469 at Gaeta, in the kingdom of Naples; whence the surname, by which he is commonly known among historians, especially Italian historians, of Gaietan. He too was a Dominican and had attained the dignity of general of the Order. He was besides distinguished by great talents and considerable theological, or rather canonical, erudition. He was considered one of the most accomplished disputants in the court of Rome, and was supposed to possess a complete command over the scholastic armoury. To much experience in the diplomacy of the Vatican he added the greatest fluency and readiness of expression. More than this, his personal character offered a splendid exception to the established habits of Rome; insomuch that the purity of his life and a certain austerity of disposition acquired him no little respect and influence among the Germans themselves. His church principles were those becoming his Order and his station. In the late Lateran council held by Julius II. he had

gained distinction by his zeal for the papal predominance and the energy with which he had exhorted his master to assert his spiritual despotism : “ That you may imitate, holy father, the power, the perfection and the wisdom of God, gird yourself with your sword—that sword which is especially your own. For you have two, one in common with the other princes of this world, the other peculiar to yourself ; and which none can possess except from yourself. Gird then this sword on your thigh, above all the powers of the human race, and march against errors, heresies and dissensions. March and reign. March and prosper, priest and king ; utterly scattering the nations that wish for war, and meditating and searching after the things of peace ! ” * Such was the voice which stimulated Julius II. against the cardinals of Pisa and their secular supporters. Such the character which was now to be brought into direct collision with the evangelical simplicity of Luther, and to oppose with all resources of earthly craft and power the yet feeble and scarcely-flowing current of the Reformation.

The Emperor and the princes of Germany were at that time assembled in diet at Augsburg. Six of the electors were present, and almost all the nobility and statesmen of the empire. The meeting was celebrated with unprecedented magnificence. The display of new and foreign luxuries indicated the extension of commerce and the general progress of civilization ; and the spectator, † who observed and related that novelty, might have discovered a sign even there of the approaching emancipation of the minds of his countrymen and the downfall of the spiritual

* Ap. Seckendorf, lib. i. sect. ii. § ii. Addit. iii.

† See a Letter of Ulric Hutten, dated from Augsburg, Aug. 22, 1518, to be found in Von der Hardt, near the beginning of his *Histoire Littéraire*.

despotism. Many distinguished foreigners were present. The kings of France, Hungary, and Poland, were represented by their ambassadors ; and not the least in honour among so many eminent personages was the legate of Leo X.

The subject of greatest interest at this diet was the proposed election of a king of the Romans, as successor to the empire. Maximilian warmly urged this measure, and recommended to the electors his own grandson, Charles of Spain. Frederick of Saxony opposed the project, on the general ground that it went to violate the constitution of the Germanic body ; and he defeated it. But this difference was conducted with moderation, without any display of personal animosity, and with every show of mutual respect. The policy of the Pope is believed to have agreed on this matter with the principles of Frederick. Another question commanding much attention was that of a religious coalition against the Turks, who were then menacing not Hungary only but also Italy. The legate was accordingly active and eloquent in furthering the scheme. His ostensible design was to unite the whole German nation in one Christian league under the banner of the Cross. But beneath it he nourished the less magnanimous intention of levying tenths and a capitation tax throughout the empire, and obtaining the consent of the princes to the proclamation of fresh indulgences. The affair of Luther was likewise to be set at rest. But this did not occasion any deep interest among the subordinate members of the diet ; indeed it was probably considered by them a matter of mere spiritual jurisdiction. And, as the summons for his appearance was issued late, the deliberations were concluded and the assembly in fact dispersed, before his arrival at Augsburg.

Yet Maximilian, who still remained in the immediate

neighbourhood, was not likely to be an indifferent spectator of the scene now to be enacted beneath his eyes. He was far indeed from being a convert to the principles of Luther; he had even expressed to the Pope (in a letter of August 5) his reprobation of the opinions of the innovator, and his resolution not to protect him in case of condemnation. But he had probably a political motive for this; for it is well known that he was neither enslaved to the pretensions of the See, nor blind to the general perfidy of those who occupied it, nor careful to conceal his thoughts on those matters. “And now has this Pope too” (thus he spoke respecting some transaction in which Leo X. had overreached him) “been guilty of baseness towards me. Now can I say that no Pope, so long as I have lived, has dealt with me truly and faithfully. I hope, however, by God’s will, that this will be the last of them.”* Respecting the predecessor of Leo he had spoken with equal openness: “Immortal God!” he once exclaimed, “unless thou wert watchful over thy creation, how ill would it fare with that world which is governed by us two—the one a miserable hunter—the other that drunken and rascally Julius!”†

* “Nun ist dieser Pabst auch zu einen bösewicht an nur worden; nun mag ich sagen, das mir kein Pabst, so lang ich gelebt, je treu und glauben gehalten hat. Hoffe ich aber, ob gott will dieser soll der letzte seyn.” Scultetus (ann. 1520, p. 56) gives these from Hutten, as the Emperor’s words.

† “Deus æterne, nisi vigilares, quam male esset mundo, quem regimus nos, ego miser venator, et ebriosus ille et sceleratus Julius!” Julius, on his part, in comparing the respective merits of the Emperor and himself, used to say, “Both bodies made a mistake. The electors ought to have raised me to the empire. The conclave ought to have chosen Maximilian to be pope.” See Gaillard, *Hist. François I.*, tom. i. p. 140. It is a curious but well-ascertained fact, that Maximilian did actually aspire to succeed Julius in the possession of the see, and with that view even offered himself as a sort of coadjutor to the latter during his life. But the overture was not well received at Rome.

Neither was he patron of the general vices of the church, those especially which invaded the property of the German people. And in respect to the particular abuse of indulgences, he had on one occasion issued an express edict to the inhabitants of Memmingen, to prohibit the preaching of them ; though fear or policy led him afterwards to revoke it, and even to become a reluctant accomplice in the spoliation of his subjects.* He read during the diet the Theses of Luther ; he spoke of them to Pfeffinger, the minister of Frederick, with considerable respect, and recommended him, as has been already mentioned, to be careful of the person of their author. From these circumstances it would appear that Maximilian was not only sensible of the injustice of Rome, but also of the approach of the season of Reformation. Yet was he not a person who acted consistently on any principle. Wavering and irresolute ; hasty in the formation of projects, timid in their execution ; in his friendships faithless ; feeble and contemptible in his hostility ; and perpetually changing both his allies and his enemies—yet all this through weakness rather than wickedness ; insatiably eager after pecuniary profit as the principal end of all his schemes, yet immediately dissipating his gain with sumptuous prodigality ; he had still one bright and redeeming quality—the affection which he showed for the liberal arts, and the zeal with which he fostered them. From an emperor so constituted Luther had not to expect any steady protection, nor any violent persecution. Had it served the policy of the moment he might perhaps have been made its sacrifice ; otherwise, it must rather have been the purpose of the prince, so far as he had any fixed purpose, to preserve him. The counsel so recently given to Frederick

* Gerdesius, vol. i. Monumenta Antiquit., Num. viii.

could scarcely be at once contravened by the very man who offered it.

Frederick, through the long exercise of great political discretion and sagacity, had acquired the surname of the Wise—nor perhaps through that alone, but through the possession too of many of those virtues which form indeed the noblest part of political wisdom. His disinterested magnanimity, his love of peace and public tranquillity, the firmness of his principles, the extensiveness of his philanthropy, are attested by the impartial monuments of the age, and are not disputed by the Roman Catholic historians. He too was distinguished as an ardent supporter of reviving letters—a merit which was acknowledged by the grateful pen of Erasmus. After eulogising the prince for his considerate exertions “in improving his own states without seeking to injure those of others” (a rare praise indeed in a statesman of that generation), the writer continued : “He has likewise enriched the Christian community with a new university, which in very few years he has raised to the most flourishing condition in every description of letters and languages. Yet so moderate is he in the favour which he bestows on the best studies, that the patrons of the old learning have no just cause of complaint against him. How ungrateful will Learning be, unless she consecrate the merits of this her champion with immortal monuments!”*

I have already spoken of the religious character of Frederick, of his affection for the See of Rome, his fear of insubordination and schism. He respected the acknowledged head of the Christian church ; he disliked dissension, and dreaded the consequences of any violent change ; and it was probably his prayer, and it may have been his dream, that the manifest impurities of the system might

* This is from a Letter to Spaldin, dated July 11, 1520.

one day be washed away by the hands which administered it. Yet he loved the voice of truth, from whatever quarter it might proceed ; and his sense of justice withheld him from any share in any act of oppression. "He was not," says Melancthon, "one of those who would stifle changes in their very birth. He was subject to the will of God. He read the writings that were put forth, and would not permit any power to crush what he thought true." By such principles he had been guided thus far in the affair of Luther. He had observed the progress of the student from his early youth. He had honoured him by repeated marks of his respect. He admired his talents ; he loved the earnestness and singleness of his purpose ; he probably agreed in some of the opinions propounded in his Theses. On the other hand, he had never admitted him to his presence. He had not openly or in secret given any sort of sanction to his late proceedings, any more than he had exercised any authority to repress them. He perceived that they issued from an evangelical spirit and were connected with the triumph of religious truth ; yet he foresaw the confusion to which they might possibly lead. And thus had he remained, up to this moment, an impartial, though not indifferent, spectator, and allowed the controversy to follow, without any interference on his part, the channel marked out for it by the good providence of God.

It was this spirit which dictated his reply to Cardinal Raphael. The same was the principle of his conduct on the present occasion. He would neither openly protect his subject, nor indirectly sacrifice him. His reverence for the church forbade the one ; his respect for justice the other. But the middle course, which he was thus compelled to take, was in effect a course of opposition to the pure despotic claims of Rome, and was so far favourable

to the Reformer. He commanded Luther to appear at Augsburg and plead before the Legate; but at the same time he caused him to be provided with letters of recommendation to certain persons of authority resident in that city. Luther obeyed without reluctance, in spite of the forebodings and remonstrances of all his friends; and, having performed the journey on foot and in poverty,* and at some risk from the emissaries of Rome, he arrived at his destination on the evening of the 7th of October (1518).

It was an unfavourable circumstance for him that the diet was dissolved before his arrival. That which his cause then most required was publicity and discussion. His opinions had been misunderstood and misrepresented. His solitary voice had been in many places drowned in the clamours of his adversaries. Ancient prejudices and established authorities were almost all against him. "My writings" (he said at this time†) "give offence to many people, to most people, to almost all people." If he could have found some great public occasion for explaining them, much of this dislike, which, though exaggerated in the above expressions, did exist, might have been removed. Neither was this diet, as it would seem, indisposed to listen even to the strongest invectives against the vices of Rome. A Latin discourse was there put forth, during the deliberations on the Turkish war, which far surpassed in violence anything yet composed or meditated by Luther: "Your desire" (it thus addressed the assembled states) "is to expel the Turk. The design

* "Veni pedester et pauper Augustam."

† To John Langus, Sept. 9, 1518. "Scripsit mihi Illustrissimus Princeps se in mea causa egisse, ut Legatus Cajetanus scripserit ad Urbem pro mea causa committenda in partes; et interim id me debere expecare. Ideo spero censuras non ventura esse. Displifico autem multis, pluribus, plurimis." No. 80.

is good, but you are mistaken as to his person. You must seek him in Italy, not in Asia. Each of our princes is able to defend his own states against the Turk of Asia; but as to the Turk of Rome, all Christendom united is not sufficient to overthrow him. The former has yet done us no mischief; the latter walketh about everywhere thirsting for the blood of the poor.”* The ears which did not revolt from such language as this would have been soothed and conciliated by the comparative moderation of Luther.

He was received into the Augustinian monastery; and his first step was to send a messenger to announce his arrival to the Legate, and to express his readiness to appear before him. The reply was an immediate summons. But before he had time to obey he was visited by an Italian named Serra Longa, an emissary of Gaetan, who was commissioned to ascertain his feelings and to prepare him by mingled threats and promises for unconditional submission. But Luther suspected this “Simon,” and penetrated his devices, and even observed how awkwardly he had been trained in the arts of the Pelasgi. Thus some little time was gained, and he had the means of consulting with the friends to whose protection Frederick had consigned him. They consisted of Pentinger, the Imperial counsellor, and others the most distinguished inhabitants of the city. All these exhorted him with one voice not to trust himself in the presence and power of the Legate until he had obtained a safe-conduct from the Emperor. They even expressed their astonishment at his boldness in having ventured on the journey to Augsburg thus unprotected. He yielded to their recommendations; and they undertook on their part to procure the necessary paper.

* Schröck K. Geoch. n. d. R. 1, p. 156. ap. D'Aubigné, tom. i. liv. iv.

Maximilian was in the neighbourhood, engaged in his favourite diversion of hunting. There might be some question whether he would grant this safe-conduct. Only two months before (Aug. 5) he had addressed a letter to the Pope, expressing great apprehension respecting the affair of Luther. He had been lately informed, he said, that an Augustinian named Martin Luther had advanced certain propositions relative to the sale of indulgences, and that the said brother had found defenders and patrons even among men in power. "If these scandalous proceedings are not promptly repressed," he continued, "by your Holiness and the authority of the church, the common people will first be seduced by these evil instructors, and the peril will thence extend to the sovereigns. We on our side shall not fail to enforce throughout our empire whatever you shall decree on this subject, to the glory of Almighty God." This letter was doubtless written at some moment when Maximilian wished either to gain the suffrage of the Pope, or to avenge the opposition of Frederick. Had the feeling whence it proceeded been permanent, the friends of Luther, who were also the friends of Frederick, might have made their present application in vain. But it did not prove so; and in a very short space of time Luther received his safe-conduct.

Meanwhile the people of Augsburg showed a flattering curiosity to behold the notorious stranger. "Nothing is doing here new or wonderful" (Luther wrote on Oct. 10 to Melancthon), "except that the whole city is filled with the sound of my name, and all are anxious to set eyes upon the Herostratus of so mighty a conflagration." "The Germans, worn out by the impostures of Rome, were looking in anxious suspense to the event of that undertaking, which no prelate or divine had dared to handle before me. And I was cherished by that popular

breeze, which showed how hateful were those Roman arts and practices that saturated and wearied the whole world.”* These expressions were also used in reference to his appearance before the Legate. It must be mentioned however that the motive for this general curiosity was not always good will, or admiration. If the great body of the more enlightened citizens of Augsburg took deep interest in the cause of the Reformer, the lowest classes of the people, those most blindly devoted to their spiritual deceivers and least capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood, were defenders of the established tyranny.† This league between extreme parties for the profit of the more cunning, this conspiracy of ignorance with imposture and despotism for the support of the last, is not an uncommon event in the history of human infirmity; and even to Luther—whose heartiest desire and deepest principle it was to rescue the souls of the ignorant from fraud and bondage and consequent perdition—it was no cause of surprise or discouragement to perceive the very masses whom he destined to enlighten arrayed under the sacerdotal banner against him.

Gaetan, becoming impatient at the non-appearance of Luther, sent his messenger again to bring him into his presence. Serra Longa reproached him with the disrespectful delay; he urged that in a monk exempt from temporal jurisdiction it almost amounted to rebellion, and exhorted him to immediate obedience. But Luther was now better instructed. He pleaded the deference due to the advice of those friends, to whom his sovereign had committed him, as a duty to the sovereign himself, and expressed his resolution to wait for the safe-conduct.

* *Præfatio Operum.*

† Luther wrote to Carlostadt on the 14th of October: “Ich hab allen menschen gunst und zufall, allein ausgenommen vielleicht den haufen, der es mit dem Kardinal hält.”

The Italian was irritated. "Dost thou imagine," he said, "that Prince Frederick will take up arms on thy behalf?" "I should be extremely sorry." "Where wilt thou dwell then?" "Under Heaven." "If thou hadst the Pope and the cardinals in thy power, what wouldst thou do with them?" "I would offer them all possible reverence and honour." Then the other, moving his finger with an Italian gesticulation, ejaculated "Ha! ha!" and so he departed and returned no more.* This took place on the third day (Monday) after Luther's arrival at Augsburg. On the same day the Imperial Senate announced to the Legate that Luther was furnished with the Emperor's protection under the public faith, and admonished him not to proceed to any extremities against his person. To which Gaetan is said to have replied, "Be that as it may, I shall do my duty."

On the day following, the 11th of October, Luther presented himself for the first time before the Legate. It was not without some apprehension that, even thus fortified, he did so. "I am going to offer myself to immolation for your sake and that of my fellow-countrymen"—thus he wrote to Melancthon; and he may not have forgotten that the safe-conduct of Sigismond had not availed to preserve his Bohemian predecessor from the flames of Constance. The Legate was surrounded by his courtiers, who pressed with no friendly curiosity about the spiritual rebel; but Gaetan preserved the dignified courtesy becoming his rank and character:† he received with politeness and almost

* "Tum ille, gestu Italico movens digitum, dixit Hem! et sic abiit neque reversus est." Præfatio in Opera anno 1545.

† "Suscepit fui a reverendissimo Domino Cardinale Legato satis clementer ac prope reverenter. Vir enim est omnibus nominibus alius,

deference the customary obeisances of his inferior ; he showed, in the first instance, the greatest disposition to listen to him, and prohibited any interruption on the part of his officers.

He immediately declared to Luther that it was his wish to set this controversy at rest by mild and paternal measures : and that to this end he had only three demands to make of him :—

1. That he should return to his senses and retract his errors.

2. That he should promise to abstain from the same in future ; and

3. From all others which might tend to disturb the Church.

The character of a judge, not of a disputant, was that which properly belonged to the Legate, and which, as it was far easier to support, it was more prudent to preserve. Nay, his real character, according to the brief of Leo, was that of an executioner even more than of a judge, and his actual commission only to carry into effect a sentence already pronounced at Rome. But he carefully concealed those instructions, and professed to act, as if the power of condemnation or acquittal were still vested in himself.

Luther did not dispute the authority of the church to inflict punishment upon error. But he disclaimed the error ; and required to be first convinced that the doctrine, which he was called upon to disavow, was not pure evangelical truth. Hereupon the Cardinal descended from his first ground and took upon himself to explain in what the error consisted.

quam hi fratrum venatores robustissimi.” Acta D. Martini Lutheri, apud Legatum Apostol. D. Caetanum, &c.

He confined himself to two; he accused Luther of having taught:—

1. That the merits of Christ were not the treasure of indulgences—which was to impugn the Extravagant of Clement VI.*

2. That faith in the efficacy of a sacrament is essential to the obtaining of grace through the receiving of it—which was a new doctrine, and in opposition to the truth.†

Luther was prepared to maintain both these positions. The latter was indeed that to which he attached the greater importance, as involving the mighty considerations of grace and justification and the saving efficacy of the holy mysteries. “If I dislike indulgences, I am not for that reason a bad Christian; but if I should retract my doctrine about faith, I should altogether deny Christ. But such is my doctrine, and such it will remain until the opposite be proved to me from Scripture.” Thus he wrote on this subject to the Elector; he had spoken to the Legate to the same effect; and it was doubtless an honest expression of his feelings. But in the eyes of the Cardinal, the worldly ecclesiastic, the member of a pampered hierarchy, the representative of the power and the necessities of Rome, the more essen-

* Luther advanced this in his 58th Proposition: “*Thesauri Ecclesiæ unde Papa dat Indulgentias. . . non sunt merita Christi et Sanctorum: quia hæc semper sine Papa operantur gratiam hominis interioris, crucem, mortem, infernumque exterioris.*”

† Luther was made responsible for this doctrine by his 7th Proposition, which does not however seem necessarily to contain it: “*Nulli prorsus remittit Deus culpam, quin simul eum subiciat humiliatum in omnibus sacerdoti suo vicario.*” But in referring to the “Resolution” of this Article, we discover the offensive tenet: “*Merito queritur: quomodo ante gratiam infusam, i. e. ante remissionem Dei, hæc fieri possint? Cum sine gratia Dei primo remittente culpam, nec votum remissionis quærendæ habere possit homo.*”

tial question was that, which involved the authority of the Pope and the profitable prerogatives of the See. And thus, in the sequel of this affair, it proved that Gaetan was willing to compromise the second of his charges, provided Luther would retract the first.* So long as the might and majesty of the church were undisturbed, so long as its edicts were obeyed, so long as its formal rites and practical observances were externally respected, so long as the sources of its revenues were not troubled, it concerned itself little with the mere theological speculations which might exercise the ingenuity of the faithful. And thus great latitude of conscience was contemptuously permitted by the Church, wherever it was covered by all those outward indispensable graces which were, in fact, comprehended in the single word—obedience.

On these principles the Legate laid the greater stress (though both were debated) on the former of the alleged errors; and, seeing the firmness of Luther, and no doubt confident in his own practised talents, in the weight of his authority, in the very strength of his cause, he advanced into the dangerous field of argument. I shall not pursue the particulars of this disputation. It turned for the most part on the Extravagant of Clement. On the one side, the prerogatives of the apostolical See were exalted above all other power, that of councils and even Scripture not excepted; and the conclusions of Aquinas were produced as truths from which there was no appeal. On the other, though the doctrines of Gerson and the decisions of the university of Paris were not forgotten,

* In his subsequent colloquy with Wenceslaus Linck the Legate expressly said: “Si indulgentiarum impugnationem revocaret Lutherus, totam causam componi posse; articulum enim de sacramentis admittere moderationem et interpretationem.” See Seckendorf, l. i. 18, xxxvii. Addit. i.

the groundwork of the argument was placed upon Scripture, the paramount authority of its statutes confidently proclaimed, and the right of private interpretation not so much insinuated or even asserted, as assumed.

A controversy conducted on such opposite principles could only end in a wider and more hopeless difference. In fact, the arguments of Luther were not so much as intelligible to his opponent; and this, as the former at the time complained to Carlostadt,* was his peculiar hardship, that he had a judge who was not only hostile but incapable of comprehending the nature of the question in dispute. And this circumstance was not only consistent with the great scholastic ingenuity ascribed to Gaetan, but even the consequence of it; since the mind which had been so carefully trained in one direction only was for that very reason the less capable of suddenly turning into a new and wider field of theological reasoning.

At this moment Staupitz arrived at Augsburg. Sincere in his attachment both to the principles and the person of Luther, yet trembling for the consequences of his insubordination, he was desirous, if it were possible, to preserve his friend; if it were not, at least to prevent the Order from being involved in his disgrace. With these feelings, he immediately adopted one of those ambiguous expedients of timid minds which admit a double interpretation. He released the monk from his obligation of obedience. This dissevering of so strong a tie at a crisis of such imminent danger appeared, on the one hand, like a formal renunciation of the culprit, as a seditious and dishonoured member; on the other, it gave to Luther a somewhat greater latitude of ecclesiastical

* In a German letter, dated October 14: "Deswegen auch meine sache in so viel mehrer gefährlichkeit stehet, dass sie solche richter hat, welche nicht allein feinde und ergrimmet sind, sondern auch unvermüglich die sache zu erkennen und zu verstehen."

independence, while it relieved the Vicar-general from the odious duty of co-operating with the Legate in the chastisement of a refractory son. Yet to Luther it seemed no friendly act,* and he read in it a foreboding of some great calamity, and a sad and certain proof of the faithlessness of all human support and the necessity of placing confidence only in that Being, which can neither deceive nor be deceived.

On the succeeding day he returned to the conference. He was accompanied by several friends—Staupitz, who suggested religious consolation and encouragement; two imperial councillors, and two councillors of Frederick,† who were charged with the care of his safety, besides a notary and other witnesses. He opened the proceedings by reading a short protest to the following effect: “First of all I declare that I reverence and obey the holy Roman church in all my words and deeds, present, past and future; and if anything to the contrary effect has been, or shall hereafter be, advanced by me, be it considered null and void. But in respect to the three commands laid upon me by the pontifical Legate, I who search only after truth cannot relinquish that pursuit, much less can I be compelled to retract without being heard or convinced. This day do I protest that I am not conscious of having said anything opposed to Scripture, the fathers of the church, the decretals of the Popes, or sound reason. Yet as a fallible man I have submitted, and I still submit, to the legitimate decision of the holy church, and to all who are better capable of judging than myself. I offer, therefore, here or elsewhere, in public or in writing,

* He used afterwards to call this his first excommunication, that of Leo being the second, and the Edict of Worms the third.

† One of these was a Doctor Ruhel, who wrote an account of this conference to the Elector, which is still extant. Luther in his Acts speaks of “quattuor Cæsareæ majestatis senatoribus,” as present.

to reply to any objections which the Legate may advance against me, and to appeal respecting them to the opinions of the most distinguished doctors of the imperial universities of Basle, Friburg, Louvain ; and especially of that of Paris, which is the parent of learning, and from ancient times the most flourishing in Christian theology.”

Gaetan naturally considered this protest as altogether evasive. Yet he received it with moderation ; and, after renewing his argument at some length and with great vehemence against the former of the two propositions, and reiterating his importunate cry for retractation, he at length assented to the request, proposed by Luther and supported by his friends, that he should be allowed to make his defence in writing.

On the ensuing day, at a third and final conference, he did so. In this document he re-stated the offensive opinion, That the merits of Jesus Christ and the saints did not form the treasure of indulgences ; and defended it by many arguments. He urged that Scripture was misinterpreted in the constitution of Clement ; that the decrees of the Pope were often erroneous ; that the duty of obeying them depended on their conformity with Holy Writ and the ancient fathers ; that a council in matters of faith was superior to the Pope ; and not a council only, but every individual Christian, if he rested on higher reason than the Pope—and for this last audacious position he cited the authority of Panormitanus.* He argued that the merits of the saints could form no part of any such treasure, since the saints themselves were only saved through the merits of Christ : nay, that the righteousness of Christ itself was not a treasure of indulgences excusing us from good works, but a treasure of grace quickening

* A bishop of Chartres, who lived towards the end of the eleventh century, and compiled a book of Ecclesiastical Law called *Panormia*.

us to perform them ; and that it was distributed to the faithful not by indulgences, nor by the keys, nor by any human agency, but by the Holy Spirit alone. He likewise defended by several scriptural arguments his suspected doctrine concerning the necessity of faith. He then concluded : “ Wherefore, most reverend father, I entreat you, whom the singular favour of God has enriched with many excellent gifts, and especially with acuteness of judgment, to deal mercifully with me ; to compassionate my conscience, to point out some light which may guide me to another view of these questions, and not to compel me to a retractation of opinions to which I am bound by conscientious necessity. With these conflicting authorities before me, I cannot do otherwise than obey God rather than man. Deign, therefore, to mediate for me with Leo X., that he will not so harshly cast into darkness a soul which seeks only light, and which is most ready to yield, change, retract everything, as soon as it shall be better instructed. I am not so arrogant or vainglorious as to be ashamed to revoke any real error ; nay, it would rather be my great joy so to do, that truth might be triumphant. Only let me not be forced against my conscience, for without any doubt I believe this which I have written to be the sense of Scripture.”

Gaetan could scarcely repress his contempt and indignation ; and Luther on his part lost somewhat of the deference which he had hitherto shown towards the person of the Legate. A warm debate ensued, in the course of which the latter, whose superiority in scriptural knowledge was already placed beyond all question, proved himself likewise the more acute disputant. Gaetan was clamouring for retractation and obedience to the constitution of the Pope. “ Well,” said Luther, “ prove to me only by that constitution that the treasure of the

Church is the very merits of Christ, and I will consent to retract." The Italians exulted. The Legate eagerly opened the volume and read the contested passage, panting with the warmth of his anxiety. "The Lord Jesus Christ acquired this treasure by his sufferings——" "Most worthy father," interrupted Luther, "deign to consider this expression carefully: *acquisivit*—acquired—Christ has acquired a treasure by his merits; the merits then are not the treasure; the cause is different from that which flows from it. The merits of Christ have acquired for the Pope the power of giving such indulgences to the people; but they are not his very merits which the Pope distributes. Thus my conclusion is sound, and this very constitution, to which you appeal so loudly, attests the truth which I declare." "Retract," rejoined the Legate, after some ineffectual attempts to evade the difficulty and to shift the ground of argument—after enduring some irony from his triumphant opponent on the supposed grammatical ignorance of the Germans—after making a declaration of the powers with which he was invested—after venting some vain boasts and some menaces which proved scarcely less vain—"retract," he concluded, "or appear in my presence no more!"

When Gaetan adopted the character of an advocate he placed himself in a false position, nor was he altogether unconscious that he did so. On the second day of the conference, Luther designated as a "contention"* the controversy which had been waged between them; on which the Legate, with great mildness and show of fatherly affection, corrected him: "My son, I have not contended with you; it is not for that purpose that I sit here. My design is no more than to instruct

* "*Satis fuisse, dicens, mecum anteriori die digladiatum.*"

you, and to listen to you with kindness, through the consideration which I have for the illustrious prince Frederick." Nevertheless he persisted in mingling argument with authority, and colouring his demand for retractation by demonstrations of the errors to be retracted. This may have proceeded partly from an indulgent temper, of which the praise can scarcely be refused to him; partly from confidence both in the strength of his cause and in his own powers of maintaining it; partly, and perhaps chiefly, from the necessity of preserving at least some show of justice. In the heart of Germany, in the presence of free and enlightened and impartial witnesses, it was impossible to condemn the offender without some attempt at least to prove the offence. Among that people the day was gone by, in which the limits of orthodoxy could be defined by naked authority, and men of distinction irresponsibly consigned to chains, or death. The dominion of mere brute force was at an end. The first principles of justice were on every side acknowledged. It became the Roman delegate to vindicate his proceedings—if possible, by reason—if not, by sophistry. Thus much deference at least was demanded by the common sense and feelings of the German nation.

Defeated in these three attempts to obtain his end by personal and public conference, unwilling to desist, and fearing to strike, the Legate had immediate recourse to the more dangerous method of private negotiation. He determined to employ the influence of a common friend where his own had failed. Scarcely was the last meeting over, when he sent for Staupitz, and urged him, with many expressions of good will towards "his monk," (no longer his monk,) to undertake the office of conciliation.* The latter professed his willingness. But as

* In the course of this dialogue Staupitz suggested to the Legate the

both parties were aware that Luther would require some satisfactory answer to his scriptural arguments, and as the Vicar-general was no better provided with such answer than the Legate, he entered on his task with no great hope of success. And such was the result. Luther repeated to his ancient patron his desire to yield, as soon as ever the passages which he had alleged from Scripture could be shown to have another meaning than that which he had assigned to them. Staupitz professed his inability to convict him of any error; and Luther asserted with courage and magnanimity the overruling obligation of conscience. "He offers to guarantee me from disgrace! What better than everlasting disgrace is his, who denies, through any fear of man, what he sincerely believes to be the truth?"

His letters written to Spalatin and Carlostadt at this moment exhibit the same righteous resolution: "The Legate will not allow me to make either a public or private defence. His desire, he says, is to act the part of a father rather than of a judge; and yet he will hear nothing from me but the words, 'I retract and acknowledge my error;' and these words I will never utter. . . He always styles me his dear son. I know how little that means. Still I doubt not that I should be to him one of the dearest of men if I would but utter the single word 'Revoco.' But I will not become a heretic by renouncing the faith that has made me a Christian. Better far to be an outcast, to be anathematised, to perish at the stake."

The next advances, however, were made by Luther.

expediency of another public conference with Luther, on which the other very decidedly replied, "*Ego nolo amplius cum hac bestia colloqui; habet enim profundos oculos et mirabiles speculationes in capite ejus*—I will converse no more with this beast; for he has deep-set eyes and wonderful speculations in his head."

On the 15th of October he commissioned one of his friends, Doctor Wenceslaus Link, to visit the Cardinal and mediate for the termination of the affair. Gaetan received the messenger with his wonted courtesy, and continued to express the most friendly disposition towards the culprit; and, on this occasion, he confined his demands to the retraction of the *first* article—not doubting that the question on faith would admit of some common interpretation and compromise. On hearing this last suggestion, even the moderate Staupitz regretted that the speech had not been taken down before witnesses, to the end that all the world might know in how much higher esteem gold is held at Rome than faith.*

This negociation having likewise failed, Staupitz and Link consulted, as they thought, their own security, by departing from Augsburg. Luther then (on the 17th) addressed the Legate directly by letter. Nothing could be more respectful, nothing more humble and self-accurring, than the tone of this composition. He professed a filial affection and perfect reverence for the person of

* “Romæ plus æstimari pecuniam quam fidem.” Seckendorf, l. i. 18. xxxvii. Yet Staupitz not long afterwards disclaimed his ancient pupil, and made his submission to Rome. On Jan. 14, 1521, we find Luther addressing him thus: “When we were at Augsburg, among other matters relating to this cause of mine, you said to me, ‘Be mindful, brother, that thou hast undertaken these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ:’ an admonition which I received, not as from you, but as through you, and which I have laid up and retain with great tenacity. . . . It is now for me to address the same to you: be thou too mindful that thou hast spoken this word to me. Thus far we have only trifled in this affair. Things are now becoming serious; and, as you then said, the work cannot be perfected but by the hand of God.” And on the 9th of the following February: “Just as you exhort me to be humble, so exhort I you to be proud. You are as much too humble as I am too proud. . . . In truth, that submission of yours has given me no little sorrow, and exhibited to me a very different person from that former Staupitz, the preacher of grace and the cross. . . .”

his judge:—"My fear decreases day by day, and is turned into sincere love and deference to your fatherly kindness. I confess that I have been too confident, too harsh, too little submissive towards the sovereign Pontiff. Towards my opponents, notwithstanding the provocation they have given me, I ought to have adopted a milder and more courteous deportment. All this afflicts me deeply, and I pray for forgiveness. I am ready publicly to acknowledge these my faults from every pulpit. Henceforward, by God's mercy, I will endeavour to speak differently. More than this. I will promise never again to utter a word on the subject of indulgences, as soon as this business shall be over, provided those who began this tragedy be compelled on their parts to moderate their speeches, or to be altogether silent.* As to the truth of my doctrine, I would willingly retract everything if my conscience would permit me. I therefore submit myself to the church. I beseech you, in all humility, to refer this matter to the Pope, in order that the church may decide and ordain; so that, whether to retract or to persist shall be determined, it may be determined with certainty and justice. . . ."

Under all these fervent professions of deference for the Legate and the church, there lurks no compromise of any principle hitherto professed by Luther. It is true that in his private letters written during that period he spoke of the Cardinal in very different language. But his loyalty to the church was still unshaken. He acknowledged the reverence that was due to the represent-

* *Dabo deinceps operam ut alius sim et aliter loquar, Deo miserente. Imo promptissimus sum atque facillime promitto, me posthac materiam de indulgentiis non tractare atque his finitis quiescere, modo illis quoque modus imponatur aut sermonis aut silentii, qui me in hanc tragediam suscitaverunt.*

ative of the Pope; and he confessed that even the words of truth should be pronounced with humility and distrust.* It may be mentioned, too, if any excuse be required for so natural an act of expediency, that he wrote this letter at the express solicitation of his ancient friend and patron Staupitz.

He received no answer. The Legate was expecting either still further effects from the mediation of the Vicar-general, or fresh instructions from Rome, or the revocation of the safe-conduct of the Emperor. But Luther had now performed all that he deemed his duty to the church, and he was not disposed to encounter any unnecessary risk. So long as he remained within the same walls with the Legate, however respectable the protection extended to him by the Elector, he was not safe. His friends, suspecting the present inactivity of the agents of Rome, urged his immediate departure from Augsburg. He consented; and, the means of escape being provided, he left the city by a private gate before daybreak on the morning of the 19th of October. One of the senators furnished him with an escort. A horse had been left for him by Staupitz; and, having once cleared the walls, he set off with as much speed as if Gaetan and all his myrmidons had been already in full pursuit. But it is recorded that, so indifferently was he equipped in boots, spurs, and other appliances, and perhaps so little practised in that mode of travelling, that, after his day's journey of eight weary German miles, he fell down on the straw, entirely overcome by fatigue, and slept by the side of his beast.

Before his departure he prepared two other compo-

* “Sed oportuit reverentiam servare ei qui vice summi pontificis fungatur; tum quod etiam verissime dicta aposteat cum humilitate et timore asserere et tueri.” Admonitio in Acta Augustana. Apud Seckend. l. i. s. 18. § xxxix.

sitions. One of them was a second letter to the Legate : its professed object was to announce his design of withdrawing ; but it was not delivered, nor of course intended to be delivered, till after he had completed that design. It was written with greater boldness than the former, and, though he mentioned in it his great weakness of body and extreme poverty, he abstained from all expressions approaching to flattery, and even so far impugned the authority of the Cardinal, as to avow that he was now looking to the Pope himself for the decision of the cause. And in communicating the nature of his resolutions he declared, parenthetically, his conviction that his own prince would be better pleased to hear of his appeal, than of his retractation.*

The other was a solemn Appeal to the Pope. In this celebrated paper, which was his first formal act of insubordination, he explained the true nature of his previous proceedings—how his Theses involved no question of articles of faith, or of any of the commandments of God or of the church, but were confined solely to that of indulgences. He remonstrated against the citation to Rome, and remarked on the partiality of the judges there appointed, and on the dangers to which he would have been liable in that city ; which he did not, however, fear to designate, even in a submissive address to its sovereign, as “ a city of homicides.”† He complained that the Legate before whom he had appeared was a Dominican and an enemy ; and that, though at first humane and courteous, he had finally rejected his submission, and commanded him, under pain of excommunication, either

* “ Scio enim principi nostro illustrissimo gratum facturum appellando magis quam revocando.”

† “ Juxta Esaiam de Roma fere dici potest : justi habitaverunt in ea, nunc autem homicidæ.”

to retract, or to present himself at Rome. He then repeated in the strongest possible terms* his professions of fidelity to Pope Leo X., and his absolute adhesion to every doctrine which could be proved from Holy Writ, the fathers of the church and the sacred canons. Lastly, he pronounced his deliberate appeal, from the aforesaid Most Holy Lord the Pope not well informed, to the same the Lord Leo X., by Divine Providence Pope, when he should be better informed.

He left this document in the hands of his friends, not to be presented to the Legate, but to be affixed, two or three days after his departure, to the door of the cathedral—to the end that its publicity might be effectually secured, and that all the Christian world might learn the nature of the controversy and the grounds of his resistance.

* “ Ex quibus me gravatum æsumque et oppressum sentio, cum et hodie fatear solummodo me disputasse, et omnia sub pedibus Ssⁱ Domini nostri Leonis X. subjecisse, ut occidat, vivificet, reprobet, approbet, sicut placuerit. Et vocem ejus vocem Christi in ipso præsentis agnoscam. Et legitime protestor me nihil dicere aut sapere velle, quod non in et ex sacris literis et ecclesiasticis patribus, sacrisque canonibus probari potest. Idcirco a præfato Ss^o Domino nostro papa non bene informato ejusque prætensa commissione . . . ad Ss^m Dominum in Christo patrem et Dominum nostrum Dominum Leonem Dei providentia Papam X. melius informandum provoco, appello in his Scriptis . . .,” &c. The document is of considerable length, occupying four or five folio pages.

CHAPTER VII.

PROCEEDINGS AT WITTEMBERG.

Gaetan writes to Frederick—the substance of his letter—its objects—Luther's eloquent answer—he offers to depart into exile—his two letters to Spalatin—remarks on these compositions—petition of the university of Wittemberg for Luther—confidence acquired by him after the affair of Augsburg—Acts of the Conference of Augsburg—Publication of an appeal from the Pope to a general council—premature through the printer's treachery—substance of this, and remarks on it—some of Luther's own expressions—Frederick's cautious and dignified answer to Gaetan—Luther's continued suspense and uncertainty.

THE position of Rome in respect to her spiritual subjects was such, that, in any difference that might arise with them, any result not involving the entire overthrow of the malcontents was a dangerous defeat to herself. This is to a great extent true of all despotic powers ; but most strictly so of that, which based its despotism upon credulity, and could hope to reign no longer than it could hope to deceive. None knew this secret so well as the more intelligent officers and emissaries of the Vatican. And thus Gaetan, when he learnt the departure of Luther and the bold appeal by which he had signalised it, began to tremble for the success of his mission and for his credit at the apostolical court. Yet, as the offender had escaped from his hands, and was again under the immediate protection of Frederick, no other expedient remained than a direct attempt to gain that prince. With this view, the Legate addressed to

him, on the 25th of October, a letter containing his own account of the proceedings at Augsburg, of which the following is the substance :

“Most Illustrious Prince, Martin Luther arrived, provided with letters from your Excellency ; and before he came to me he set about to furnish himself with a safe-conduct, which he obtained from the imperial councillors through your influence—yet not without my knowledge ; for those personages would grant him nothing, except with my permission. But I told them they might act as they chose, provided my name were not involved in the matter. Yet I began to wonder ; for if you placed confidence in me, there was no need of this safe-conduct ; if you did not, you should not have sent him to me as to a father.

“Brother Martin then came to me, and first made some excuses about his safe-conduct, owing to enmities and so forth ; then he said that he was come to listen to me, and to profess the truth as professed by me. I received him most willingly and courteously, and embraced him with the arms of a father. I told him, above all, that he should be interrogated according to solid Scripture and the holy canons ; and, if he came to his senses and gave security that he would not return to his vomit, I had the authority of Pope Leo to arrange everything.

“I then proved and paternally admonished him that his Theses and Sermons were at variance with the apostolical doctrine, especially respecting indulgences, and I cited the Extravagant of Clement VI. as in direct opposition to him. I adduced besides the ancient custom of the Roman church ; and in respect to another article of faith, on the sacraments, I showed that his opinion was unsound and opposed to Scripture and the doctrine of the church. In opposition to that clear and manifest Extravagant he said something or other not worth re-

lating, and asked a day for deliberation. I exhorted him to return to his senses, and dismissed him.

“Next day he returned, accompanied by the Vicar-general and many others; and when I was expecting that he would come to himself,* he made a protest before a notary whom he had brought with him. I smiled at this, and again exhorted him in the kindest manner to return to a sound heart; that it was hard for him to kick against the pricks. He then replied, that he wished to answer me in writing, as I had battled with him enough in words the day before. I was surprised at the audacity of the man, and said, ‘My son, I have neither battled with you, nor intend to battle. I am prepared, through my respect for Duke Frederick, to listen to you kindly and paternally, to admonish and instruct you, and to reconcile you, if you will, to Pope Leo and the church of Rome.’

“Then both he and his vicar entreated that I would allow him to answer in writing. I replied that I would most willingly listen to him, and act in all respects as a father, rather than a judge. So he went away and then returned for the third time with a long written phylactery, in which he replied in the silliest manner to the constitution of Clement; he even derogated from its sanctity in asserting that it abuses the authority of Scripture. And in respect to the question of the sacraments, he filled the paper with Scripture passages altogether impertinent and misinterpreted.

“I first proved to him that he had placed a wrong meaning both on the Extravagant and on Scripture; and then I exhorted him again and again not to be wise

* “*Ut se vere agnosceret,*” “*ut se cognosceret,*” “*ut ad cor et sanitatem rediret,*” “*seipsum cognoscere et salvare animam suam*”—these expressions in the Legate’s account of the business correspond with the ‘Revoco’ in Luther’s.

beyond what was lawful, nor to intrude new dogmas into the church, but to return to his senses and save his soul.

“Then came to me the vicar of the congregation, with whom, and a master of theology in the same Order (Wenceslaus Link), I treated this business for many hours, considering how the scandal might be removed, without compromise to the Apostolical See, and without stigma of disgrace on brother Martin. When these foundations were laid, and I was entertaining good hopes, the abovesaid vicar departed, without so much as saluting his host, and entirely without my knowledge; and then brother Martin and his companions followed; thus practising a pretty trick upon me, which will rather prove however to be one upon themselves. I received some letters from Martin, in which he pretended to beg for pardon, without retracting the abuse and scandals which he has cast upon the Catholic church.

“For my part, most illustrious Prince, I am not only surprised at this deceitful determination of Luther and his followers, but I am altogether astounded and horror-struck. For at the moment when I had most hopes of his return to health I was most frustrated. Nor do I see exactly in whom he trusts for support in these proceedings.*

“Three things however I will venture to affirm in this matter: First, that the opinions of Luther, which are only suggested for disputation in his Theses, are directly asserted in his Sermons; and that they are in part opposed to the apostolical doctrine, and in part damnable. And you may believe this, as I speak from certain knowledge, not as a mere matter of opinion. Secondly: I exhort and entreat you to consult your honour and conscience, either by sending Martin to Rome, or by expel-

* “Non video tamen ejus fiducia hæc agat.”

ling him from your dominions. Thirdly : be assured that this grave and pestilent matter cannot long remain where it now is. They will now pursue the cause at Rome ; for I have washed my hands of it, and have related to the Pope the frauds that have been practised. P.S. I entreat you again and again not to be deceived by those who say ‘ There is no harm in Martin Luther’s assertions ;’ nor to cast a stain on the glory of your ancestors and on your own, as indeed has been your constant promise, for the sake of one contemptible monk.* I speak the pure truth, and will preserve the law of Christ : ‘ By their fruits thou shalt know them.’ ” The last few lines were written with his own hand.

This letter was intended to convince the Elector that Luther had been treated with mildness ; that his opinions were heretical ; that they had been confuted by scriptural argument ; and that his escape from Augsburg was an act of perfidy : while it contained a very intelligible insinuation that Frederick was considered as his protector, and that the court of Rome would now adopt much stronger measures both against Luther and his adherents. Nor indeed was it any longer concealed that Gaetan was already authorised to proceed, should he deem it expedient, to the utmost extremities. And this consideration was not lost upon the cautious mind of Frederick. He was not yet involved in the cause of Luther ; he was not so friendly to it as its adversaries imagined. Yet was this a very natural error on their part. For they beheld the courage of Luther, without any knowledge of the depth and sincerity of his faith ; they had no consciousness of any strong religious

* “ *Iterum atque iterum rogo ut D. V. I. note permittat se decipi a dicentibus : nihil mali contruent F. M. Lutheri dicta : nec ponat maculum in gloriam majorum suorum et suam, propter unum Fraterculum, ut toties promisit. . . .* ”

motive in themselves; they suspected none such in him; and when they looked, in their purely worldly view of this dispute, for some outward prop whence he gathered all this confidence, they could discover none, except in the supposed support and patronage of his prince.

The Elector did not receive this letter till the 19th of November. He forwarded it instantly to Luther, and the latter replied to it on the same day. In this very eloquent and even dignified composition (addressed to Frederick) he entered at some length of explanation into the particulars briefly alleged by Gaetan, and mentioned some circumstances, and made some observations, which are embodied in the account contained in the preceding chapter. He denied that he had offered the Legate any deliberate disrespect, while he complained of the overbearing authority which commanded him to retract without exhibiting any proof of his error. He offered to defend his doctrines, and challenged his adversaries to a public disputation, within the States, or under the safe-conduct of the Elector. At the same time he skilfully exculpated the latter from the charge of having been privy to the publication of his Theses, or of having shown in this last affair any undue favour towards himself, or any distrust towards the Legate. He expressed his deep sensibility to such slanders upon his prince. He extolled with great warmth the singular acuteness of his understanding—"that most penetrating judgment which is formidable even to the most learned, and with which Providence has distinguished the genius of the Elector Frederick before that of every man of his age." Above all, he professed his own determination to suffer any evil rather than compromise the honour or fidelity of his sovereign :

"It is my earnest desire and prayer that you may in

all respects adhere to the church and the Pope, though you should in all respects be opposed to me. The only thing I ask for myself—nay rather for the sacred truth, for the honour of the church, of the Pontiff, of the most reverend Cardinal, and even for your own good report—is this: that some publication be made of those reasons and authorities by which my error is supposed to be proved. For to condemn me without these would not be very honourable either to you, or to the Pope, or to the church, or to the Legate himself. The faithful live, Christ lives—nay there live even men who can judge this matter.

“As to the admonition of the Legate, that you should either send me to Rome or eject me from your dominions, since they will prosecute the cause at Rome. . . . I am not altogether reluctant to go into exile, for I see snares everywhere set for me by my enemies, nor can I live in safety anywhere. Poor and humble monk as I am, what is there that I can hope for? What is there that I have not to fear? What may not I expect from my fears, when these people do not hesitate to offer so signal an insult to you—a very powerful prince, an elector of the sacred Roman empire, a distinguished supporter of the Christian faith—to you—who have deserved so much better of them—as to threaten you with some fearful calamity, unless you send me to Rome, or into banishment?

“On which account, that no sort of evil may befall you through me, which least of all things I should wish, behold, I forsake your dominions, I go whithersoever a merciful God shall call me, and commit myself to His divine will under every contingency. There is nothing that I less desire than that any mortal, and least of all yourself, should fall into any odium or any danger on account of me.

“Wherefore, most illustrious prince, I salute you with all reverence and bid you a simple farewell, rendering you immortal thanks for the benefits you have conferred on me. Under whatever sun I may chance to dwell, I shall never be unmindful of you, nor ever cease to pray with sincerity and gratitude for the happiness of yourself and your subjects.”

Luther repeated the same expressions in letters addressed to Spalatin about the same time. On the 25th of November he wrote as follows: “I am expecting your censures on the answer that I have sent to the Legate’s letter; unless indeed you think it unworthy of any reply. But I am looking daily for the anathemas from Rome, and setting all things in order; so that when they arrive I may go forth prepared and girded like Abraham, ignorant whither I shall go—nay, rather well assured whither—for God is everywhere.” And again, on December 2nd: “Unless I had received your letters yesterday, I was ready for departure. And even now I am prepared for either resolution. The anxiety that people here show about me surprises me, and is even greater than I can bear. Some insist strongly that I should deliver myself into the hands of the prince; that he should place me in some safe custody, and inform the Legate that he holds me in readiness to come forward and plead my cause in any secure place. Whatever this counsel may be worth, I commit it to your prudence; for my own part, I am in the hands of God and my friends.”

It should be remarked that Luther was extremely well advised in all these expressions and suggestions. Under the show of much disinterestedness he took precisely that course which was best suited to serve his purpose, by recommending him to the favour of the Elector. While he professed great reluctance to com-

promise Frederick in his fortunes, he threw out a hint, in the name indeed of his friends, which would have effectually compromised him, had he acted on it. If we praise his magnanimity, we must at the same time admire his forethought and discretion. His reply to the Legate was a vindication, not only of himself but of his prince—of what he had himself done and of what he trusted that his prince would do—and it was artfully constructed, so as to appeal to his vanity, to his pride, as well as to his justice. Nor may we omit the following expressions, addressed in truth to Spalatin, but intended of course for the Elector: “It is very fit that he who, though just now a mendicant monk like myself, presumes to approach the most powerful princes without any respect for their dignity, to write to them, to menace and to command them, to treat them at his pleasure with extreme insolence, should learn, late though it be, that the secular power is likewise of God,* and that its majesty is not to be trampled on with impunity, especially by one who derives his authority only from a man!”

This language was somewhat too disrespectful towards the Legate to be addressed directly and officially to the Elector; but, when communicated through the chaplain, it was well suited to irritate his monarchical pride, without any breach of delicacy on the part of the writer. If there was no period in Luther's life more critical than

* “Optime actum est ut is, qui paullo ante mei similis mendicus monachus nunc etiam principes potentissimos non veretur sine ulla honoris ratione adire, alloqui, minari, mandare et pro libitu superbissime tractare, discat vel sero etiam sæculi potestatem a Deo esse et suos non licere honores conculcari, præsertim ab eo, qui ab homine tantummodo potestatem accepit.” Luth. to Spal. Dec. 20, 1518. No. 103. *Edit. De Wette.*

the present, there was none in which he conducted his cause with more consummate skill.

He likewise prevailed* upon the university of Wittemberg to address the Elector on his behalf. The petition of that body was expressed in the most loyal terms, and confined to the most moderate request: That Frederick would interpose so far as to require a written statement of the errors of Luther, together with the scriptural texts and arguments by which they were proved. For this, they urged, was the ancient practice of the church, this the rule of the fathers, that heretics should be pressed by reasons and authorities, not by naked assertion and brute force. "At the same time it is our great delight, most illustrious prince, to observe the honour which you show towards the church and the Pope. Such shall ever be our wisdom; and if this man shall be proved to hold any evil opinions we will be the first to forsake him. For we consider nothing more venerable than the decision of the holy Roman church.† . . ."

Meanwhile Luther had been meditating still another expedient to evade the expected excommunication. On the very day of his return to Wittemberg (October 31) he wrote to Spalatin, and informed him that he was preparing an "Appeal from the Pope to a Future Council." His successful encounter with a pontifical Legate had naturally shaken many of the prejudices which he had contracted as a churchman and a monk. He had been forced into contact with this mighty ecclesiastic, armed

* "Rogavit itaque atque impetravit (frater M. Lutherus) ut apud Illus. T. Celsitatem intercederemus et supplicaremus, &c. . . ." Epistola Acad. Wittemberg. ad D. Fridericum, &c.

† "Denique id addicim, si repertus fuerit hic homo in aliquo male sensisse, crimus primi qui cum alienum habebimus. Nihil enim antiquius ducimus iudicio sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ." Ibidem.

with the thunder of the Vatican, and he had not so much escaped as triumphed. Besides, the daily proofs which he received of the powerful effect of his writings, and the universal excitement occasioned by them, redoubled his confidence, and taught him to rest it on higher and firmer ground than the favour even of a virtuous prince. The very fury of his enemies confirmed him: "The more fierce are they," as he wrote to Spalatin, "the less fearful am I." Without consulting the Elector, and, as it proved, against his wish, he published the "Acts of the Conference at Augsburg;" and added to them an Epilogue, in which he scouted the Pope's claims to infallibility, or superiority to Scripture or a general council; and even questioned the scriptural foundation of his power. For his intended appeal he pleaded the example of the university of Paris, in case the Pope should reject his late appeal from Augsburg. And of this he could now have little doubt, as he had seen at Nuremberg, in the course of his return, the brief which contained the commission of Gaetan and the anathemas against himself and his adherents. Accordingly he completed the document, and on the 28th of November it was published.

The publication was premature. The bolt had not yet descended, nor was there any positive information that the Pope "better informed" persisted in his severity. The measure was not at that moment prudent, it was not consistent with Luther's actual policy. Therefore we need not distrust his repeated asseveration that the act was not his own, but even highly displeasing to him. He had caused the manuscript to be printed, that it might be ready without a moment's delay to meet the Roman censure whensoever that should arrive. But the printer could not resist the temptation offered by so valuable a possession—he broke his faith and sold

the greater part of the impression. Thus the die was cast.*

In this very celebrated composition Luther pleaded, first, the right of appeal, natural and divine, which belonged to every human being when under oppression. He declared that by his present act he intended no disobedience or disrespect to the church, nor to the authority of the Pope well advised (*bene consulti*). He asserted, however, that a Pope, being human, was as liable to infirmity, error, sin, falsehood, vanity, as any other man; that St. Peter himself afforded a sad proof of the fallibility to which man was subject; and that, if a Pope publishes decrees in opposition to Scripture, disobedience becomes not only pardonable, but a duty. He related the course of his own affairs and the successive wrongs which he had suffered and was still expecting to suffer; and then appealed from the Pope ill advised and all his commissions, tribunals, excommunications, &c. &c., present and future, to a council to be legally assembled and in a secure place, to which he should have free access for the defence of his opinions.

Luther, when he wrote this, believed that he was at length fairly committed with the Papacy; that there was no longer any place, not for retractation, not for compromise, or silence, but even for cautious and defensive proceedings. It was necessary to advance. There was no hope of maintaining the ground which had been gained, except by marching onwards. There was no prospect of any permanent advantage to the cause of Christ, none even of personal safety to himself, unless he should adopt a bolder course, and, passing by those mere out-

* Luther to Wencesl. Link. Dec. 11, 1518. "Edidit Impressor noster Appellationem nostram ad concilium multa et magna displicentia mea—sed actum est." He explained the transaction at greater length in a letter to Spalatin, dated the 20th of the same month.

works, about which he had hitherto contended, direct his arms at once against the centre of the system.

“My pen is in labour with far greater matters:” thus he wrote to Link in December. “I know not whence these meditations come to me; but this affair, in my mind, has not yet reached so much as its commencement—so far is it from that conclusion of which the peers of Rome are dreaming!”*

Those meditations came to him from above. He was guided by an unseen hand through his perplexed path; and if that which seems to us his discretion was no more than a part of God's visible providence, so those events which we call accidents and mischances were no other than a more obscure operation of the same wisdom, tending by less manifest means to the same object. The very perfidy of a nameless printer advanced the work, when he hurried the publication of a document which, had it not been then published, might, as we shall presently perceive, have been suppressed altogether.

Ten days afterwards Frederick sent his answer to the letter of Gaetan—dated Altenburg, December 8, 1518—enclosing likewise the reply of Luther. The Elector's epistle was short and far from flattering. He observed that he had sent Luther to Augsburg according to his promise; but that the latter, instead of receiving those paternal admonitions, which the Legate had so repeatedly held forth, had been commanded to retract; that there were many learned men, both in his own states and in universities elsewhere, to whom it did not appear that Luther's doctrine was impious, or heretical; though there were some indeed whose private and pecuniary interests were not advanced by his learned labours, and who

* “Res ista necdum habet initium suum—tantum abest ut finem sperare possint Romani procures.”

through selfishness opposed him, yet without making good the ground of their opposition ;* that, had he any real proof of the impiety of the doctrine, he should need no foreign admonition to repress it. “Wherefore we had hope not to be visited by the menace that the court of Rome would prosecute this affair, nor by the demand to send Luther to Rome, or into exile—if for no other reason, because he is not yet convicted of the crime of heresy. His expulsion too would cause much mischief to our university, which, as is well known, is a Christian body, containing many virtuous, learned and studious men. Since therefore Martin offers to submit either to the judgment of certain universities, or to a public disputation, we think such permission should be granted him, or at least that his errors should be proved in writing. For which last indeed we are ourselves especially anxious,† that we may learn wherefore he should be deemed a heretic, and see clearly on what grounds we ought to act. As the matter now stands we cannot so deem and denounce him. . . .”

There can be no doubt, from some expressions in this letter, that Frederick was much influenced to his just determination by the affection which he bore to the university of Wittemberg, which was, indeed, not only the chief ornament of his states, but also the favourite creation of his own hands. In fact he adopted the very prayer of its petition, and urged it as his own. His answer occasioned proportionate delight in that city;

* “*Exceptis nonnullis, quorum rei privatæ et utilitati pecuniariæ eruditio ejus non profuit, qui ut propria commoditati consulerent Martino sese adversarios opposuerunt, suo tamen proposito contra Martinum nondum probato.*” *Principis D. Friderici, &c., Responsio ad Literas D. Thomæ Tituli S. Sixti Cardinalis, &c.*

† “*Aut saltem ei ostendendos in Scriptis errores. Id quod et nos petimus, ut sciamus, &c. . . .*” *Ibidem.*

but to Luther it was chiefly satisfactory, because it treated with indirect contempt the spiritual despotism of the Pope; because it asserted, for its author at least, the right of private judgment, and recommended another tribunal, that of certain universities, as a sort of court of appeal from the decision already pronounced both at Rome and Augsburg.

If the avowal of these independent principles in so high a quarter increased the general confidence of Luther,* yet was he not without disquietude as to his immediate fate. The sentence was still suspended over him; day by day he was expecting it to descend; and though he braved it he feared it. The Elector's late communication contained no pledge to protect him against the papal anathema, and he continued ready for departure. On the 13th of December, five days later, he wrote to Staupitz as follows: "The prince, in his anxiety for me, would still greatly prefer that I were anywhere else than here. He has caused Spalatin to have a long conversation with me on this subject. I said, 'If the censures come, I shall not stay here.' But he dissuaded me from setting out so hastily for France; and I am still waiting his counsel." There was, no doubt, one moment when the Elector even expressed a wish that he should withdraw from his dominions. He prepared for obedience; when he received a second communication which commanded him to remain: "As the Pope's new envoy" (were the words) "hopes that matters may be settled by a conference, do not withdraw for the present."

* Luther's expressions were—"Bone Deus! quam cum gaudio eas legi et relegi, sciens quam sint fiducia plenæ et tamen mira modestia conditæ. . . . Id metuo ne Itali sat intelligant quod in recessum habent At hoc saltem videbunt, sese nihil adhuc eorum incepisse quæ jam consummasse sibi videbuntur." Luther to Spalatin, Dec. 20, 1518.

It was natural enough that Luther should select Paris as the place of his retirement. He was encouraged by the principles of Gerson and by the late appeal which the university had made from the Pope to a general council. He presumed that he should receive some sympathy from that learned body, and that he should propagate in security his anti-papal doctrines under its protection, or perhaps with its direct encouragement. As the experiment was not made, it would be vain to speculate on the probable result. But in my opinion his hopes would have been altogether disappointed. The principles, which that ancient and in many respects very bigoted body had found it expedient under particular circumstances to assert for itself, would not probably have been tolerated in a German and an exile; and in the vehement and despotic Francis the reformer would have learnt to regret the moderation and justice of his own sovereign. It was well I think for his cause, and perhaps for his person, that he was not compelled to exchange a field, which was peculiarly his own, for so very precarious a chance of foreign patronage.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MISSION OF MILTITZ.

Proceedings at Rome—opinions on Gaetan's conduct—moderate policy adopted there—new bull on indulgences—Charles Miltitz sent as Nuncio to the Elector—his character—original intention—conciliatory policy—disgrace and death of Tetzel—the Golden Rose—interviews between Miltitz and Tetzel at Altenburg—conditions there agreed on—Luther's letter of submission to the Pope—explanatory letter to Spalatin—observations on his letter to the Pope—on the sincerity of his professed humiliation—on the compromise of an evangelical doctrine—his promises and advice exactly such as would have been most beneficial to the Papacy if adopted—Luther's own view, late in life, of this negotiation—Luther summoned to Coblenz before the Archbishop of Treves—refuses to go—Miltitz, acting with Gaetan, then again calls for retractation—Luther's submissive letter receives no answer, and so the negotiations are fruitless.

WHILE these events were succeeding each other thus rapidly at Wittenberg, the court of Rome was no less active in devising schemes for the extinction of the feud. The failure of Gaetan caused great dissatisfaction at the Vatican. Some were of opinion that he ought to have seized the person of Luther before the safe-conduct was obtained. Others blamed the imprudence with which he risked his theological erudition against the deeper scriptural knowledge of the heretic; others the harshness by which he sought to intimidate, where by soothing and promises he might have won. All judged from the event. It is by no means clear that the Legate had the power, surrounded as Luther was by official friends, to carry him away to Rome. To have made so violent an attempt and failed in it would have roused all Germany to insurrection; even to have succeeded, in

defiance of the first principles of justice and in the face of the Emperor's safe-conduct and the protection of the Saxon court, would have proved a dangerous gain. Besides, had his scriptural learning been never so extensive, he would not have persuaded either Luther to retract, or any impartial witnesses to agree with him, simply because all the rights of the question, as a scriptural question, were against him. And as to promises and praises, he had to deal with a mind contemptuous of all earthly dignities and on its guard against the proverbial faithlessness of Rome. I can see no just cause for these censures on Gaetan. Perhaps he should have abstained from argument, and certainly he might have argued better; but the result would still have been the same; nor would any device of reason, or display of knowledge, or lure to ambition or avarice, ever have tempted Luther to pronounce those six essential letters—*revoco*.

But, however the Roman courtiers may have differed on this matter, they all perceived that the dispute had now acquired very great importance, and that immediate measures must be taken to repress it. They all imagined too that this end would be effected if they could extinguish Luther. It is ever thus with the supporters of any depraved system, or any form of injustice. They see their danger in the boldness of the reformer, not in the iniquity of the abuse. They do not perceive, that it is the righteousness of the cause which imparts courage to his heart and conviction to his eloquence; and that the same cause would not fail to work its way by other agents, even if the instrument of the moment should be withdrawn. And thus the high papal party continued to meditate, not how they might remove the grounds of this spreading insubordination, but how they might put down its visible instigator.

It was debated whether immediate recourse should be had to extreme measures, or whether milder expedients should be first attempted. The pacific disposition of Leo inclined him to the latter counsel, and it prevailed. The first proceeding of the Vatican was to publish, on the 9th of November, a fresh bull on the subject of indulgences. It was addressed to the Legate in Germany, and intended for the perfect information of the German people, that no one might thereafter have any pretext for pleading ignorance of the apostolical doctrine; but the name of Luther was not mentioned, nor was his heresy directly stigmatised. The first clause was even directed against the reported excesses of the preachers* of the indulgence, and the Legate was charged to repress them. But the next proceeded to confirm the doctrine as laid down in the Extravagant of Clement. It asserted that the Pope had power to absolve both from the sin and the punishment, whether in this life or in purgatory, by dispensing indulgences out of the superabundance of the merits of Christ and the saints;† and therefore that all, whether living or dead, who had rightly obtained such indulgences, were liberated from as much temporal punishment, due by divine justice to their actual sins, as might be equivalent to the indulgence acquired.

Now, since Luther had in the first instance certainly declared more than once, that the cause which had moved his indignation was rather the impiety of the preachers than the actual indulgence; and as he had afterwards proclaimed his readiness to submit, in the ignorance and

* They were called "*Religiosi ad evangelizandum Dei verbum deputati.*" *Nova Decretalis Leonis X.*, &c.

† This passage is expressed with an obscurity which one not familiar with the prolix and tortuous emanations of the Vatican would suppose to have been intentional.

perplexity of his heart, to the deliberate decision of the Pope—that holy Daniel who sat in innocence among the lions of Babylon ; this bull would be considered at Rome as containing a concession sufficient either to reduce him to silence, or else to place him in contradiction with his previous assertions and promises. And somewhat earlier it might have produced some such effect. But it was now too late. Matters had been proceeding at Wittemberg with too much rapidity. The above constitution was not published in Germany (at Lintz) till the 13th of December, and before that day, not only had the Elector made known his reply to Gaetan, but the “Appeal from the Pope to the Council” was published and circulated. The Pope “better informed” had actually repressed one of the abuses of the indulgence. But Luther’s first appeal was, of course, abrogated by the principle asserted in the second, and the bull which followed it was thus, as a means of reconciliation, entirely thrown away.

In pursuance of the more moderate policy adopted at Rome, it was decided to send an ambassador forthwith to the court of Saxony, not as the messenger of anathemas and interdicts, but as the bearer of the Golden Rose, the highest mark of pontifical honour and affection. But the more important object of this mission was, as was well understood by all parties, to put an end to the affair of Luther, by securing, if possible, the person of the offender ; or, if that could not be, by reducing him to submission, or silence.

Charles of Miltitz, the person selected for this enterprise, possessed many qualifications for success. He was a Saxon, the descendant of an ancient and noble Misnian family, himself a cavalier of Saxony, and at the same time chamberlain of honour to the Pope and in the confidence of his master. As a German, he would be less liable to suspicion from his compatriots, who were armed

with a general distrust of Italian duplicity ; as a distinguished subject, he might hope to acquire some personal influence at the court of Frederick. He was a layman too, and thus he carried with him none of those professional prejudices which might have blinded him to the real state of the controversy, and was free from that unbending bigotry so common in that age of that church. He was a skilful negotiator, calm, observant and flexible. Respectably versed in literature ; in manners courteous and affable ; disciplined in penetrating the character of others, he wore over his own a show of candour and honest benevolence, which was not altogether feigned. Such was the agent appointed to deal with the earnest, impetuous, unpractised mind of the professor of Wittemberg ; and perhaps it was not easy to have exposed his principles to a greater danger. He had confuted argument, he had resisted menace, but a more insidious trial was now in preparation for him.

Miltitz brought with him into Germany seventy papal briefs,* to assist him in accomplishing the real object of his mission. He had briefs for the Elector, his minister, and his secretary ; briefs for the governor and magistrates of Wittemberg ; others for the authorities of the different cities through which he might pass in his return—all directed against the person of the heretic—all designed to protect himself from violence, and his future prisoner from rescue. But scarcely had he crossed the Alps, when he found reason to fear that even these precautions would not serve him. As he made his further progress through the empire, carefully sounding as he advanced the dispositions of the people, his fears at every

* “ Fuit armatus Septuaginta Brevibus Apostolicis in hoc negotium, ut me captum perduceret in Homicidam Jerusalem, purpuratam illam Babylonem, ut postea in aula principis accepi.” Epist. to Staupitz, Feb. 20, 1519.

step were confirmed;* and he presently came to the conviction, not only that his briefs were absolutely worthless, but that a powerful army would be necessary for the escort of his captive. This conviction was established by a fact not lost upon his observation, that the late indulgence-bull, notwithstanding the clause against the intemperance of the preachers, had been ill received throughout the country, and that few were found who bought the wares.

Miltitz arrived in Misnia in December much better instructed as to the state of this controversy than when he set out from Rome; and he took his measures accordingly. His first was an offensive step, but it was directed, not, as all expected, against Luther, but against Luther's original antagonist, Tetzel. The Nuncio had ascertained the spirit of the people; he felt, as a German, that it must first be propitiated, and the new bull gave him his authority. Accordingly, he summoned the Dominican before him at Altenburg. The reply of Tetzel was dated from Leipsig on the last of December, and the reasons by which he excused himself from obedience throw light on the history of that moment. He affirmed: That the journey would be unsafe for him; that the greater part not of Germany only, but of Poland and Hungary, was so roused by Luther as to leave no place of security to himself; that he had been accused to Gaetan of certain blasphemies against the Holy Virgin; that he had refuted that calumny with no effect; that even while preaching at Leipsig he was threatened by the angry looks of his congregation; that his very life, as he had been warned,

* Ulric Zasius, a lawyer, writing to Luther from Friburg on Sept. 1, 1520, with great though not servile reverence, assured him, "*Te sequuntur passim docti omnes. Ex te pendet jam non quota pars Christiani orbis; suntque en doctissimis qui eam sortem nullo argento commutarent quod te non legissent . . .*" Ap. Scultet. Ann. 1520

was sought by the faction of Luther ; but still, greatly as he had suffered for the prerogatives of the Roman See, that he would faithfully uphold them so long as he breathed. But, notwithstanding this affecting appeal, Miltitz, when he afterwards visited Leipsig, summoned the dejected commissioner into his presence and censured him with great severity. Indeed, with so much effect did he put to shame his fraud and rapacity, that his death, which presently followed, was by Luther ascribed to disappointment and vexation.* Others dispute this ; but it is certain that, during the period of his adversity, he received from Luther a letter of consolation which may well have occasioned reflections still more bitter, even than the rebukes of his offended master.

The first overtures of the Nuncio, towards Luther as well as the electoral court, breathed nothing but conciliation and friendship. He approved his zeal in denouncing the enormities of the questors ; he remarked with great mildness upon some irreverent expressions into which he had been betrayed towards the Holy See ; and he promised entire forgiveness whensoever they should be retracted. To the ministers of Frederick he expressed the perfect respect of the Pope, as proved by the present of the Golden Rose ; while he pointed out the deplorable consequences of schism and the evils which must follow the defence of opinions condemned by the apostolical authority.

He demanded an interview with Luther, which, after some hesitation, was granted. It took place at Alten-

* “ Verbis minisque pontificiis ita fregit hominem, hactenus terribilem cunctis et imperterritum clamatorem, ut inde contabesceret et tandem ægritudine animi conficeretur. Quem ego, ubi hoc rescivi, ante obitum literis benigniter scriptis consolatus sum, ac jussi animo bono esse, nec mei memoriam metuere ; sed conscientia et indignatione papæ forte occubuit.” Luth. Præfatio Operum Latinorum.

burg, in the house of Spalatin, in the beginning of January 1519, and seemingly was conducted with some address by both parties. In the first place Miltitz represented in very strong colours the disgrace and injury which Luther had inflicted on the Catholic church—how he had seduced the whole world from the service of the Pope, and brought it over to himself. He proceeded to claim merit for having undertaken to mediate in that matter and propitiate the offended pontiff. He used towards Luther personally some flattering expressions, and even exaggerated his influence with the people: “Oh, Martin,” he said, “I thought that you had been some obsolete decrepit theologian, who sat in his chimney-corner and meditated these disputations in solitude; but I see that you are yet young and vigorous. If I had five-and-twenty thousand soldiers for escort, I doubt whether I could carry you away to Rome; for I inquired what people thought of you during my journey, and I found that, for one who supported the Pope, three sided with you against him.”* He then exhorted him to retract whatever might have given offence, and promised on his part to secure the pardon of the Pope.

Luther urged on his own behalf: That, if a schism should unhappily be the result of this affair, the blame

* See the *Præfatio Oper. Latinor.* “*Ecce, ubi unum pro papa stare inveni, tres pro te contra papam stabant.*” Luther continues: “*Illud vero ridiculum erat; exploraverat etiam mulierculas et virgines in hospitibus, quidnam de Sede (Stuhl) Romana sentirent? Illæ ut ignaræ hujus vocabuli et sellam domesticam cogitantes respondebant: Quid nos scire possumus quales vos Romæ habeatis sellas, ligneasne an lapideas?*” He had interrogated, says Luther, the women and girls about the inns and asked them what they thought about the Roman See (seat, chair)? And they, ignorant of this application of the term, replied: “How should we know what sort of chairs you have at Rome, whether of wood or stone?” This anecdote was probably related during the supper which followed the conference.

must rest with the Pope, through whose connivance and concession the Archbishop of Mayence was plundering a Christian people by the sale of indulgences, and that for no better purpose than to enable him to pay the said Pope for a pallium and dispensations, necessary for his holding at the same time, and in defiance of the canons, two archbishoprics and a bishopric; that the good intentions of Leo himself had been perverted by the usurers of Florence so far as to seek a share in this scandalous traffic;* that another cause of the present confusion was the impudence and licentiousness of the questors; that the only remedy now applicable was to impose silence on both parties, and thus allow the dispute to bleed to death; that he for his part would most willingly repair any wrong that he might seem to have offered to the Pope; that he would address to him a respectful letter in acknowledgment of his offence, and put forth a publication in which, while he explained and justified his own conduct in this business, he would exhort all men to offer perfect honour and obedience to the Holy See. With all this, he persisted in his refusal directly to retract his doctrine, though he insinuated that a form of retraction might perhaps be so ingeniously devised as not to revolt his conscience.†

Miltitz perceived that he must concede this point. Yet was it now impossible avowedly to concede it, since

* *Brevis Historia de Legato Carolo Miltitz, &c.* Op. Luth. Jen. fol. 209. The above arguments were sent by Luther from Altenburg to the Elector, as Heads of a Reply to Miltitz.

† The words are important. They were addressed on the 2nd of the February following to Egranus (Epp. No. 115). “*Mutavit violentiam in benevolentiam falsissime simulatam, agens multis sane verbis, ut pro honore Ecclesiæ Romanæ revocarem mea dicta. Cui respondi in hanc sententiam: ‘Præscribatur modus revocandi et erroris causa detur, sed talis quæ vulgo et eruditis satis sit speciosa; ne revocatio malæ speciei plus odii concitet adversus Romam.’*”

the honour of the See was staked upon that question ; he therefore sought some expedient to evade it. First, he counselled Luther to submit the matter to the judgment of the Pope, and promised him a favourable decision. But Luther, distrustful of that promise, proposed, on the suggestion of Spalatin, that the Pope should appoint certain judges in Germany so instructed that through their authorised procrastination the matter might insensibly lose its interest with the people, and so fall to pieces and be forgotten. At length they arrived at the following understanding : that Miltitz should endeavour to obtain a decree from Rome, imposing silence impartially upon both parties ; that Luther should refer his opinions to the decision of a court of German bishops ; that in the mean time he should abstain from further proceedings ; that he should make by letter his formal submission to the Pope, craving forgiveness for any hasty or disrespectful word or deed ; that he should publish a tract exhorting all people to all obedience to the Roman church. “ I gave explicit assurance that I would perform with eagerness everything that I could possibly perform without violation of conscience or of truth ; that I was as fond of peace as any one, and as anxious for it ; that I had been dragged forcibly into these commotions ; that I had done through necessity what I had done ; and that the fault did not rest with me.”*

After the conference he supped with the Nuncio. The evening was spent in great harmony and cheerfulness. Miltitz was profuse in expressions of affection towards his guest ; he even condescended to salute him when they parted : “ And I for my part so behaved as if I did not see through these false Italian tricks.”†

* *Præfatio Operum Latinorum.* “ Qui per vim tractus in has turbas necessitate adactus fecissem omnia quæ feci : culpam non esse meam.”

† “ *Vesperî, me accepto convivio, lætati sumus, et osculo mihi dato*

Meanwhile, notwithstanding his contempt for these "Italities," supposing him to have been only as sincere in this negotiation as the Nuncio, the result was decidedly favourable to the church. We shall recur to this; but first let us record that immortal proof of his fidelity to one of the above stipulations, displayed in the epistle which he addressed in consequence to Leo X.

"Most Blessed Father!

"I who am the dregs of mankind and the dust of earth am again compelled to address your holiness and mighty majesty. Wherefore let me beseech you in your great mercy to turn those ears, which are paternal and truly representative of Christ, towards this the humblest of your flock, and to deign to comprehend my bleating. The honourable man Charles Miltitz has laid grievous complaints on the part of your holiness before Prince Frederick, and required satisfaction for my alleged irreverence and temerity towards the church of Rome and your holiness. When I heard this I was deeply afflicted that my officious diligence in defending the honour of the Roman church had unfortunately brought me into suspicion of disrespect towards the head of that church. But what can I do, most holy father? I am altogether destitute of expedients. I cannot endure the severity of your wrath; yet I know not how to save myself from it. I am called upon to retract my disputation; and this I would do without any delay, if it would really produce the effect that is sought from it. But now that my writings, through the violent opposition of my adversa-

discessimus: Ego sic me gessi quasi has Italitates et simulationes non intelligerem." Letter to Staupitz dated Feb. 20, 1519. And again to Egranus on Feb. 2: "*Et sic amice discessimus, etiam cum osculo (Judæ scilicet) nam et inter exhortandum lacrymabatur. Ego rursus dissimulabam has crocodili lacrymas a me intelligi."*

ries, have obtained greater circulation than I ever expected, they have likewise sunk too deeply into the minds of multitudes to be ever recalled. Besides this, my country, Germany, is at this time so flourishing in genius, learning and good sense, that, if I would really honour the Roman See, I should best do so by not retracting anything; seeing that such retraction would have no other effect than to disgrace the church more and more, and to furnish every man with a reason for accusing it. Those are they who have brought injury and almost infamy upon that church; those, most holy father, whom I in the midst of Germany have resisted; those who in their senseless discourses, preached in your name, have promoted nothing but the basest avarice. And then, as if this were not crime enough, they accuse me, the opponent of their monstrous proceedings, as the author of their temerity.

“And now, most holy father, I protest, before God and before the whole of God’s creation, that I have never desired, nor do I now desire, to touch in any way, or undermine by any stratagem, the authority of the church and of the Pope. On the other hand, I most unreservedly confess that the authority of that church is above all things, and that there is nothing to be preferred to it either in heaven or earth, except Jesus Christ the Lord of all things.* And I beseech your highness not to believe anything different from this that any slanderer may invent concerning Luther.

“There is only one step now possible for me in this

* “*Coram Deo et tota Creatura sua testor, me neque voluisse neque hodie velle Ecclesiæ Romanæ ac Beatitudinis vestræ potestatem ullo modo tangere aut quacunq̃ue versutia demoliri; quin plenissime confiteor, hujus Ecclesiæ potestatem esse super omnia, neque ei præferendum quicquam sive in cælo sive in terris, præter unum Jesum Christum, dominum omnium.*”

matter, and I will take it. I most freely promise that I will henceforward abstain from this question about indulgences, and altogether hold my peace, provided my adversaries shall also repress their bombastic nonsense. I will also publish an address to the people, to instruct and move them to pay pure reverence to the Roman church, and neither to impute to it the temerity of its agents, nor to imitate that excessive asperity which I have used towards it in my contests with those pitiful fellows; and thus, by God's grace, this discord may probably be put to rest. For my own part, I had no other object than this: that our mother the church of Rome might not be polluted by the baseness of an avarice which did not belong to her; nor the people seduced into error and taught to prefer indulgences to charity. All the other considerations, being in fact indifferent, are held in less esteem by me.* But if there be anything more which I can do or learn, doubtless I will most readily perform it. May Christ preserve your holiness for evermore!"

Two days afterwards Luther wrote to Spalatin a letter containing a paragraph which may be considered as explanatory of the most obsequious portion of the above epistle: "It has never been my intention or wish to fall away from the apostolical See of Rome. Nay, I am even content that the Pope should be called, or even that he should be, the Lord of all. What is this to me, who know that even the Turk is to be honoured and endured when placed in authority?"

The letter to the Pope was written on the 5th of March, nearly two months after the conference with

* "*Cætera omnia, ut sunt neutralia, a me vilius æstimantur. Si autem et plura facere potero aut cognovero sine dubio paratissimus ero?*"

Miltitz. Thus was it a step taken on perfect deliberation, and as such it requires some remarks from the historian. For though it is not in any sense a satisfactory office to examine with critical minuteness the actions of great men, to weigh with a nice scale their supposed motives, to detect and proclaim their little inconsistencies, to cast stains upon the immortal vestment in which their successful deeds have robed them, and bring them nearer to the common nakedness of our poor humanity—yet in this instance the early history of the Reformation is so much the history of the individual; so much value is attached by all writers to all that he did and said at that period; so much did for the moment really depend upon his conduct and his character, that I may be permitted to bestow a short and of course impartial notice upon the document which has been just inserted.

I shall not dwell upon the motive which he there claims for his original opposition to the preaching of indulgences—to defend the honour of the Roman church; nor on that which alone he assigns for refusing retractation—that it would then have been useless and even prejudicial to the See: neither of these was strictly true, nor in accordance with his private and more honest declarations; yet, as neither of them was altogether false, they may very well be excused in an unprotected monk, conciliating an offended pontiff. As to the love of peace which he professed and his desire for retirement and repose and silence, I might remark that even at that moment he was meditating a public disputation at Leipzig, in which not only the whole subject of indulgences, but even the foundations of the Papal authority, were to be very boldly discussed. But I shall pass on to some other observations which are of greater importance.

In the above epistle Luther professed as high principles respecting the authority of the church and Pope, and

as unreserved an obedience to it, as were professed in the councils of Leo himself; for Prierias, who took the only remaining step and proclaimed its superiority to that of Scripture, was silenced about this time by the power which he thus unseasonably exaggerated. This profession he made in no cold or stinted terms, but with the energy and earnestness of seeming sincerity, and with the strongest disavowal of any wish or intention in any way to overthrow or undermine that monstrous authority. Yet in the December preceding (Dec. 11, 1518), in a letter to Wenceslaus Link, he wrote: "I will send you these compositions of mine, that you may judge whether I am right in my divination when I assert, that that true Antichrist mentioned by St. Paul reigns in the court of Rome, and is, as I think I can prove, a greater pest than the Turks." And only ten days after his letter to the Pope he addressed these confidential expressions to Spalatin: "I am sifting the pontifical decretals with a view to my disputation (at Leipsig); and, to whisper to you the truth, I am not determined whether the Pope be Antichrist himself or only his apostle, so cruelly is Christ (which is the truth) corrupted and crucified by him in his decretals. I am in perfect torture when I consider that the people of Christ are thus mocked, under the pretence of the laws and name of Christ."*

It may be that the influence of the Elector, who was extremely anxious for the peaceful termination of the affair, prevailed over the more secret principles of Luther. He may have been moved by fear—he may have yielded

* "Verso decreta pontificum pro mea disputatione; et, in aurem tibi loquor, nescio an papa sit antichristus ipse, vel apostolus ejus; adeo misere corrumpitur et crucifigitur Christus (id est, Veritas) ab eo in decretis. Discrucior mirum in modum, sic illudi populum Christi specie legum et Christiani nominis." Luther to Spalatin, March 13, 1519. (No. 127.)

to the awe which he yet felt for all established authority, in whatever wickedness it might be founded. Now, it is very easy to censure him for all this, and to point out the lofty language which he ought to have held, as the defender of evangelical truth. But we should first reflect that the revolution within him was then only in its progress—the struggle was yet raging in his bosom—the struggle betwixt prejudices carefully implanted by his education and fostered by his profession, and the strong natural power of reason and justice. And with Luther the conflict was peculiarly severe, for his mind was not formed to receive light impressions; what it grasped with eagerness it retained with tenacity, and, had it not been gifted with a counteracting force of extraordinary intensity, it might have continued ever, such as it once was, “steeped” in the papal principles.

Another remark that I must make is this: In this epistle Luther contracted his opposition to the church within the narrowest possible limits. He confined himself to the point to which, in his conference with Gaetan, he had professed to attach the least importance; and he placed among things indifferent (*neutralia*) and of low estimation those, on which he had then set the highest value. In this he did indeed follow the view in which these matters were regarded at Rome; and unquestionably he retracted nothing, and reserved his right of private judgment unimpaired. Still it was some compromise of the truth; it was some sacrifice of religious principle to consent to pass over in obsequious silence what he had so lately thought, and what he must still have thought, essential.

We may observe besides that the promises which he made and the advice which he offered were precisely those best calculated to destroy the effects of his former exertions and annul the hopes of reformation. He pro-

mised to abstain from all further discussion of the points in controversy; he insisted that the same restraint should be imposed upon those injudicious brawlers, whose silence would have been more beneficial to the See than their importunate advocacy; and he engaged to retract any articles which should be pronounced erroneous by a tribunal of German bishops. It was not indeed likely that these conditions would be ever acted on. Luther did not himself expect that result,* nor would the spirit of the Reformation have been extinguished, even if his dangerous counsel had been followed. The affair had proceeded too far. The remedy would have come too late. The sense of deception and injury and insult was too keen and general among the German people. The whole nation was awakened, and the Roman system was in such open contrast with Christ's gospel that, among men who read the gospel and believed in Christ, it could not possibly long subsist, such as it then subsisted. Some great change was morally necessary. But by seasonable concession on the part of Rome it might have been retarded; it might even have been so conducted and modified as to become the means of strength and regeneration to the church: still some revolution of some description was inevitable. But had this not been so, had there been any expedient by which the peace of the church, such as it then was, could have been permanently restored—any device by which the See could have hoped to preserve without serious diminution all its prerogatives and abuses—it was that which was suggested by Luther. His

* Letter to Christopher Scheurl, Jan. 13, 1519. "Cum Carolo amicissime conveni; primum ut hæc res omnino sileatur utrimque; deinde, mandato summi pontificis, aliquis Germaniæ episcopus articulos erroneos mihi designet, quos revocem. *Sed, nisi Deus intersit, nihil fiet*—præsertim si me decretali illa nova cœperint urgere, quam nondum vidi, &c. . . ."

arguments on this matter were those, which the most judicious zeal for the existing system and the clearest view of its actual position would have dictated; had it been possible to maintain that position, the means were those which he recommended.

When he looked back at the close of life on this negotiation, with all the results before his eyes, the following were the reflections which he expressed :*—

“ It was usual to consider both Miltitz and his scheme as altogether futile. But in my opinion, if the Archbishop of Mayence, in the very beginning, when he was warned by me—nay, if the Pope, before he condemned me unheard and stormed against me with his bulls—had taken that counsel which Miltitz took, though somewhat late, and had in a moment repressed the excesses of Tetzel, the affair would not have had such important consequences. The whole fault rests with the Archbishop, whose wisdom and craft deceived him when he thought to put down my doctrine, and so save the money which his indulgences were bringing him.”† It might seem presumptuous even to express assent to the truth of these remarks, yet they entirely confirm what has been just said in respect to the policy of the treaty between Luther and Miltitz.

But Luther was not destined to the obscurity to which his own counsels were calculated to consign him. The greatness which he seemed desirous to cast away was

* In the Preface to his Latin works.

† “ Futilis habebatur Carolus et futile ejus consilium. Sed meo judicio si Moguntinus a principio, cum a me admoneretur, denique si papa, antequam me non auditum damnaret et bullis suis sæviret, hoc cepissent consilium quod Carolus cepit licet sero, non evasisset res in tantum tumultum. Sola culpa est Moguntini, cujus sapientia et astutia eum fefellit, qua voluit meam doctrinam compescere, et suam pecuniam his indulgentiis quæsitam esse salvam.”

thrust upon him by the indiscretion of his opponents. The vantage-ground which he offered to relinquish he was compelled by their fatuous perversity to maintain and fortify. It is thus that Providence, for the instruction and abasement of Its creatures, counteracts the infirmity of one by the rashness of another, and in the faltering of our virtues employs even our follies and our vices for the accomplishment of Its eternal purposes.

The Legate Gaetan was then at Coblenz. To him, as the local representative of the Pope, Miltitz was immediately responsible for the success of his negotiation, and to him he made his report accordingly. The Archbishop of Treves, who had been named with Luther's consent among the proposed judges, wrote to the Elector to express his readiness to undertake the office. But at the same time he appointed Coblenz as the place of judgment, and requested that Luther might be sent thither. Luther of course objected : a trial at Coblenz, under the very eyes of the Legate, promised no greater impartiality than the scene already enacted at Augsburg. Besides, that prelate was only one of several* to whom the cause was to be referred ; and, as he had not received any commission from Rome, his decision might not be ratified at Rome. This was quite reasonable ; and the attempt on the other part proved, that the Legate did not intend to execute the treaty in the spirit in which Miltitz had negotiated it.

A stronger proof of this immediately followed. Miltitz, now acting on the principles and under the immediate orders of Gaetan, returned to that hopeless subject which, when left to his own judgment, he had so prudently abandoned—he repeated the call for “ retracta-

* There is some confusion as to this point ; but it is not important.

tion;" he again obtruded this, as the shortest and the surest method of concluding the controversy. It was certain that Luther would refuse this; that he considered the demand as an insult to his reason, and was far less prepared to obey than to resent it. Yet the pride of ecclesiastical bigotry persisted; and by disdaining, even at this dangerous crisis, the suggestions, not of common justice only, but of common discretion, it hastened the sure approach of its own humiliation.

Thus the compromise with Miltitz remained without any effect, and the offer of submission and fidelity, which was tendered in the most respectful terms, and which ought to have been embraced with eagerness, was allowed to lie unaccepted and even unacknowledged. Meanwhile the moment passed away. Other circumstances arose from other quarters. The dispute extended; the principles involved in it spread farther and wider; and every month that left them unrepressed increased their strength and confidence, and gave them an irrevocable advantage.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISPUTATION AT LEIPSIG.

Andrew Bodenstein Carlstadt—replies to the Obelisks of Eck—Luther at Augsburg arranges a disputation between them—fixed for Leipsig—the disputants arrive—settlement of preliminaries—certain results of the controversy—opening address of Peter Mosellanus—religious ceremonies—dispute between Carlstadt and Eck—on free-will and grace—characters of the two disputants—brief notice of the dispute—Luther's remark upon it—the doctrine of Luther and Carlstadt on this subject—why necessarily unpalatable both to scholastics and divines—Luther's part in this business—Eck's thirteen Theses—Luther's antagonist thirteen—the last on the foundation of the papal power—the court of Saxony demurs—Luther to Spalatin—Duke George remains in suspense—Luther goes to Leipsig notwithstanding—there Eck obtains permission for Luther to dispute with him—the friends of both parties dissuade the debate—they persist—the subjects—Purgatory—Indulgences—Penance—Absolution—but chiefly the thirteenth proposition—stigma of the Bohemian heresy affixed on Luther—the real use of the disputation—both claim the victory—Eck most loudly—the Leipsigers all in his favour—subsequent proceedings—Eck addresses Frederick—Luther and Carlstadt reply—Luther publishes his “Solutions of the Theses”—being the substance of his argument—Œcolampadius and Melancthon take the field on his side—Jerome Emser writes against him, repeating the Bohemian slander—Luther's Sermon on the Eucharist and consequent imputations—his indignation and confident letter to Spalatin—change of the ground of attack on him.

AN event had been for some months in preparation which, though it did not originate directly in the affair of Luther, involved both himself and his opinions more deeply than he at first foresaw, and exerted no slight influence on the progress of his cause. Andrew Bodenstein was born at a place in Franconia, whence he derived the surname of Carlstadt. A distinguished theo-

logian, he became canon and archdeacon of the collegiate church of All Saints at Wittenberg; and it was his hand, as dean of that church, which conferred the degree of doctor upon Luther. The latter has described him as his preceptor and elder in Christ; and in an epistle, dated at the end of March 1519 he expressed great admiration for his character and acquirements. Carlstadt held the same opinions with himself respecting justification, and maintained them with the same earnestness; and before the conference at Augsburg he published certain Theses* in confutation of the Obelisks of Eck and in defence of their common cause. Eck replied to these, and Carlstadt rejoined.

At Augsburg Luther had some personal intercourse with the professor of Ingolstadt; and there he prevailed upon the latter† to consent to an amicable disputation with Carlstadt on the controverted doctrine. The place fixed for it was Leipsig. The subsequent negotiations were conducted by Eck; and, after very great opposition both from the bishop of the diocese (Adolphus prince of Anhalt) and the heads of the university, the time of the meeting was appointed for the month of June following. The resistance of the prelate and the academicians was justified by the wisest principles of ecclesiastical policy. Some questions of a very delicate nature, in addition to the original subject, were proposed for discussion; others

* Four hundred and six in number, published in May 1518. They may be found in the very valuable collection of Tracts relating to the Reformation, "*Autographa Reformatorum*," which forms a part of the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

† "*Eccius noster a me tentatus Augustæ, ut cum Carlostadio nostro Lipsiæ congredederetur pro componenda contentione, tandem obsecutus est.*" Luther to Egranus, Feb. 2, 1519. See also his Letter to Carlstadt of the end of March (No. 130). "*Ego id nomine tuo cum ipso tractaram Augustæ, si qua ratione contentio vestra coram et amica familiarique congressione componeretur.*"

would doubtless rise up in the course of the controversy ; great public importance would be attached to a dispute between persons so eminent, at so critical a moment and on so distinguished a theatre ; and the church was sure to be the loser by such publicity. It was dangerous to invite men to cross the line which surrounded with a sort of prescriptive sanctity the spiritual precincts. And this was good discretion. But it so happened that George Duke of Saxony, who was cousin-german of the Elector and held the supreme jurisdiction at Leipsig, saw the matter in a different light. Though a most decided adherent of the papal party, he insisted on the propriety and necessity of this disputation. He maintained, in reply to the Bishop's prohibition—That it was essential for the people to know whether indulgences did deliver souls from purgatory or not ; that the Pope and his cardinals ought not to be jealous of the exertions of the laity to instruct themselves in the things pertaining to their salvation ; and that the theologians were bound either to defend the truth or to renounce their privileges, and along with them those revenues which, in that case, would be more usefully employed in the maintenance of old women and children—for these would at least be able to spin and chant. He gave efficacy to these arguments by his authority, and threw open a spacious hall in his own palace to the disputants and their audience.

At the appointed time the parties engaged or interested in the approaching contest assembled at Leipsig. The Duke was present and made all proper preparations for the security of the combatants and the peace of the city. The doctors from Wittenberg were escorted by a large body of students, armed for the journey and zealous in the cause of their preceptors. The first carriage was occupied by Carlstadt, who was to sustain the first onset, if not the entire weight of the contest—for that was not

yet decided. He was followed by Barnim Duke of Pomerania, a student at Wittemberg and honorary rector of the university ; and by his side sat Luther, and the celebrated friend and disciple of Luther, now for the first time entering into the current of this history, Melancthon. Eck, confident in the power and practice of disputation, was already in the field. Many strangers learned and unlearned were attracted by the fame of this exhibition.* But it was remarked with surprise, that of the bishops and abbots, fourteen in number, who resided in the states of Duke George, three only (or, as some assert, not one) were present on an occasion so closely touching their professional honour and interests.

They set about to arrange the preliminaries. Carlstadt proposed that secretaries should be appointed to make a faithful report of the proceedings, which should then be published and submitted to the verdict of the whole world. Eck objected—this was not the sort of tribunal before which he could expect to triumph ; he demanded some more precise and definite judgment. At length it was agreed that the acts should be accurately reported ; but that they should be kept private and referred to the decision of certain universities. This was, of course, the more regular determination ; and it was advantageous, so far as it had any value, to Eck ; because the schools of theology at that time were, with the single exception of Wittemberg, Aristotelian. As such, they were not favourable to the doctrine of grace, as laid down by Carlstadt. Still less were they likely to lend their patronage to any modern notions, respecting church abuses or church government, proceeding from the new

* “*Confluxit ad illud spectaculum magna vis hominum doctorum pariter et indoctorum.*” Mosellanus ad Bilibald Pirkheimer (ap. Scultet. ann. 1519, p. 37.) Erfurti, 5to Non. Aug. 1519.

academy, of which they were justly jealous. Thus the victory, in a mere ecclesiastical point of view, was secured to the Romanists. But it was not there that the contest really lay. Whoever might be the nominal arbiters, it was to the people that the appeal was in fact made. Of the members present few would suspend their judgment out of deference to any future academical verdict. The impressions produced on the spot would be communicated generally. The controversy would not end with the disputation. And though the acts themselves might for some short space remain unpublished, yet the principles advanced during the conference and the arguments in support of them were sure to be scattered by the subsequent writings of both parties over every quarter of the Christian world. And whatever glory or profit the gladiator of the church might acquire in the strife, whatever learned body might adjudge the crown to him, the final and substantial advantage could not fail to rest with the cause of his opponents.

Before I notice the part which Luther took in the controversy, or in the consultations which had preceded it, I shall give some account of the debate between Eck and Carlstadt, which was indeed the professed object of this great assembly. And if I shall omit to trace, with an accuracy which some few perhaps might desire, the many windings and intricacies of the theological monomachy; if I shall enter with little minuteness into the arguments by which the opposite doctrines, if indeed they were opposite, were laboriously upheld; let it not be imputed to entire ignorance even of the frivolities of this contest, still less to any contempt for the momentous question treated in it; but simply to a considerate conviction that the reproduction of such matter in the present age, would neither attract any general interest, nor confer any benefit on the cause of religion.

After the celebration of mass in the principal church, the parties moved in solemn procession to the appointed hall. The Dukes of Saxony and Pomerania went first, followed by a number of nobles and other persons of distinction, civil and ecclesiastical, including all the members of the university, and those by the disputants and their friends. The whole were escorted by a body of armed citizens; and the sound of martial music to which they advanced gave a sort of presage that it was not a purely amicable controversy to which they were now committed.

The debate was opened on the 27th of June by an eloquent address of Peter Schade,*surnamed Mosellanus, professor of Greek at Leipsig. He represented to the parties confronted for the combat the solemnity of the subject which engaged them, and the serious and humble mind with which they were bound to handle it; it was the law of God which they were about to investigate, and the talents and the learning which they brought to the investigation were no other than the gift of God; so that he who might seem to prevail acquired only an additional motive for religious thankfulness, and he who should be convicted of error would become better as well as wiser through the lesson thus mercifully taught to him. . . . These and similar excellent admonitions, whatever impression they may really have made on the eager polemics, were followed by mutual promises of courtesy and moderation,† and by the strongest assurances of

* Epist. Petri Mosellani ad Jul. Pflugium, et Epist. Phil. Melancthonis ad P. Œcolampadium. Apud Gerdesium Monument. Antiq. Tom. I. Anno xix, xx. &c., &c.

† “Partes utrimque pro more theologico simplicitatem suam protestabantur. Martinus hoc adjecit: Se hoc gravatim ferre, quod ex fratribus predicatoribus, qui hanc tragediam primi exsuscitassent, nemo disputaturus adesset: cum tamen in singulis suis concionibus graviter Martinianos errores in invidiam vocassent.” P. Mosell. ad Bilib. Pirk. supra citatus.

fidelity to the church, and of a fixed determination on both sides to uphold no doctrine which was not sanctioned by the church.

The ancient hymn of invocation to the Holy Spirit, *Veni Sancte Spiritus!* was then three times chanted; and those whose approaching strife was about to dismember the church, and rend by an everlasting division the Christian world, bowed down together, during the performance of this harmonious office, in the attitude of humility and in the semblance at least of spiritual concord.

Carlstadt had studied profoundly the subjects of controversy, had reflected much on them, and was earnest in his convictions. His demeanor was composed and serious; and he had the appearance of one contending with no selfish motive for what he sincerely deemed the truth. But his figure was insignificant and his voice disagreeable. He was in temper irritable, yet laborious in mind and in manner; and by reference to books,* which he at first required permission to use, he threatened to throw an unusual tediousness into no very lively description of controversy. Eck was possessed of more powerful, or at least more popular talents; he was deeply versed in all the arts and expedients of the schools; he was familiar with all the points in dispute and all the turns

* Eck, in an account which he wrote to Hoogstraten of this controversy, complains of the use made by his opponent of books and papers: "I for my part never made a single reference during the whole disputation. Besides," he continues, "there were several of them—two doctors, one Langus, Vicar of the Augustinians, two licentiates in theology, one a nephew of Reuchlin, who gave himself great airs (this was Melancthon), three licentiates in law, many masters—but I stood up alone against them all, with nothing but right on my side." The object of this letter (dated Leipsig, July 24) was to induce Hoogstraten to use his influence at Erfurth, one of the arbitrating universities, to procure Luther's condemnation.

which the argument might take. The readiness of his retentive memory, supported by great boldness of assertion, insulted the slow and scrupulous deliberation of his opponent while his commanding stature, his overbearing voice and manner, his uninterrupted fluency, his violent gesticulation, his imperious and immoveable confidence and self-complacency, completed the picture of an irrefragable polemic.*

The proposition of Carlstadt on which this controversy turned was expressed with apparent simplicity: That every good work is altogether from God—*omne bonum opus totum esse a Deo*. It comprehended, however, in its consequences, the efficacy of grace, the entire impotence of the human will; in short, the extreme doctrine that our degenerate and corrupted nature is not in any way accessory to salvation, either by doing any good action, or even by preparing the soul to receive or to merit the grace unto salvation. He admitted that it possesses a natural power to act and will, but he maintained that the moral power to do good actions proceeds entirely from grace; that it does in no manner co-operate with grace; that in the reception of grace it is purely passive; but that afterwards, when it has been regenerated by this gift of God, it employs it, through the

* Petrus Mosellanus, who, in his letter to Julius Pflug, ascribes to him most of the above qualities, remarks besides that he was deficient in that “*intelligendi prompta vis et judicandi acumen*”—that quickness and force of intelligence and acuteness of judgment—without which all the rest was useless. “*Eccius contra clamore, vultu militari et truci, gestu histrionico pœne et incessu impetuoso feroculus quispiam apparebat. Omnia illa externa corporis signa animum parum theologicum declarabant. Dixisses Gorgiam quenquam disputari, non theologum—adeo leviter et impudenter subinde se jactabat. Magnam adeo jacturam nominis apud nos fecit. Levissime asserit quæ falsa sunt; impudentissime negat, quæ pro certo vera, idque cum jactatione sui quo res fit odiosior.*” P. Mosell. ad Bilib. Pirkheim. *supr. cit.*

continued aid and direction of the Holy Spirit, in the performance of good works. This doctrine he confirmed especially by the authority of St. Augustine and St. Paul—of the former where he says “It is certain that it is we who will; but it is God who makes us will, who operates the will within us. It is certain too that it is we who act; but it is God who makes us act, in giving power and efficacy to the will:”* of the latter, in his Epistle to the Philippians: “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

The fundamental proposition of Carlstadt was met by his opponent indirectly. Eck advanced, That every good work is from God, but not altogether—*omne opus bonum esse a Deo, sed non totaliter*; and he defended this distinction by some irrelevant sophistry. His meaning, however, was this: that grace must first excite the will, but that it does no more than this; that the latter retains its freedom and acts with perfect independence; that it can give or withhold its consent; and that, according to such consent or refusal, the grace vouchsafed becomes efficacious or fruitless towards conversion.

These doctrines, with their real or imputed senses and consequences, were contested during several following days with much heat and perseverance. But we can discern only one feature in this dispute which distinguished it from any preceding academical exercise—that, while Eck appealed to the names and works of the schoolmen, while he cited their expressions and borrowed their arguments, the simpler reasoning of Carlstadt brought him nearer to the method of older days and more sacred authorities. And though the clamours of the audience were for the most part in favour of the

* *August. De Gratia et Lib. Arbit. Cap. xvi. Pant. Philipp. ii. 13.*

champion of the established system, yet the most clear-sighted of the spectators perceived, that even in this adverse field a triumph had been in fact achieved over that system by the public exposure of its absurdities.

“It is enough for me,” said Luther in his account of this controversy, “that that theologistry, the murderer of consciences, to which I owe all the sufferings of my own, has been overthrown in this dispute. For I had already learnt that merit congruous was different from merit condign; that man can do quod in se est to obtain grace; that he can fulfil the commandments of God quoad substantiam facti, though not ad intentionem præcipientis, &c. &c., and such like absurdities, which stand among the first principles of the scholastic theology, and fill every one’s books and ears. But now all these errors, though advancing under the protection and triumphant banners of Eck, have fallen to the ground with scarcely a struggle; terrified by the very aspect of these two propositions—the one of Augustine, that “free will without grace avails nothing but to sin;” the other of Ambrose, that “free will without grace approaches so much faster towards iniquity as it puts itself more vigorously into action.”*

Without investigating the points which may have distinguished the opinion of Carlstadt from the authorised doctrine of the church,† I shall merely observe how many

* “*Liberum Arbitrium sine Gratia nihil valet, nisi ad peccandum.*”
 “*Liberum Arbitrium sine gratia tanto citius propinquat iniquitati, quanto fortius intenderit actioni.*”

† Courrayer remarks, in two or three places, in his temperate and almost impartial annotations on Sleidan, that the difference between the church and Luther on the subject of justification was little more than verbal; that both affirmed the necessity of faith, that neither disputed the necessity of works; though the fury of controversy may have drawn forth violent expressions from both. It was agreed that faith was essential to salvation and to the profitable reception of the sacraments; and

reasons there were for the resistance which it encountered from the divines of that day. In the first place, the great majority of the schoolmen held the tenets commonly called semi-pelagian, asserting the co-operation of the will in the work of justification; and thus was the mass of academical learning and talent at once arrayed, without any interested motive, on honest conviction, in opposition to the dogma of the reformers. In the next place, that dogma attacked almost directly one of the most fruitful sources of ecclesiastical revenue; and thus the priests and monks were roused to no less wrath against it. For these last, having established, not so much in the theory as in the practice of the church, the opinion that good works were sufficient for salvation, and having likewise assumed the power of defining what works were good, had long ago recommended to the performance of the people such as were at the same time profitable to themselves. These were the foundation of churches and monasteries; the enriching by holy charity those already founded; contributions for masses, public and private; and last, and worst of all, the purchase of indulgences, which were no more than an expedient for commuting all good works into gold. And so it proved, that when Carlstadt and Luther substituted for this large lucrative field of mere human deeds, principles and passions, the naked rock of faith—when they preached to the people, that it was not through what they gave or what they did that they should obtain salvation, but through the purification of their motives and the regeneration of their hearts; that grace proceeding from faith and operating inwardly upon the soul was sufficient for justification; and that no man, by any visible or outward

if the Lutherans attributed justification to faith, the Catholics to the virtue of the sacraments, there was no dispute that both faith and the sacraments had a share in the work of justification.

works, could be justified without it—the more interested portion of the sacerdotal community was scandalised by their doctrine. It was assailed from all quarters ; and, while the more learned theologians denounced the dangerous consequences which it was so easy to derive from it, the mere bigots, who were below the exercise of reason, vented a fiercer rage in slanders against the persons of its authors and clamours for their destruction.

Hitherto Luther had assisted at the disputation as a simple spectator. He arrived in that character, and it seems probable that he would not have quitted it, had he not been pressed into the contest by the importunity of Eck. That polemic, not contented with the easy triumph which he expected over his first antagonist, intended to pursue his advantages, and to overthrow the chief of the faction with the same acclamation. It had been but half a victory to vanquish Carlstadt and leave Luther unscathed. Some months before, indeed, he assailed the Positions of Luther as fiercely as if he had forgotten his enmity to Carlstadt in the prospect of a greater foe ;* and at the end of February he expressed his desire to contend with him, in a letter from Ingolstadt. Luther did not decline, though he seems not formally to have accepted, the challenge. Eck published at that time thirteen Propositions in opposition to certain tenets published by Luther. Luther presently opposed to them thirteen others. The points on which the greater part of these turned were not such as to make it probable that the controversy would lead to any important conse-

* “ Sed audi hominis figuram. Meas positiones arripit et mordet atrocissime, et eum cum quo sibi res est omittit. Cogor itaque pro meis Indulgentiis homini pedem conferre.” Luther to Egranus. Feb. 2, 1519 (No. 115). He repeats the same in a letter to Spalatin of Feb. 7 (No. 119), and on Feb. 12 (No. 120) he says, “ Eckius et ego congregamur Lipsiæ post Paschalia.”

quences. But there was one of a very different character. The thirteenth and last proposition of Eck proceeded at once to the very ground which of all others it was then most dangerous to approach. "We deny" (he says) "that the Roman church was not superior to other churches before the time of Sylvester; but we have at every time acknowledged the possessor of the See and faith of St. Peter as the successor of Peter and the Vicar-general of Christ." This position, had it not been obtruded upon Luther, would not, at that time certainly, have been publicly contested by him. But since it was so, he advanced with still greater boldness his antagonist Thesis: "The superiority of the Roman church to other churches is proved by the very frigid decrees of the Roman pontiffs, which are contradicted by texts of Scripture; by the approved histories of eleven hundred years; and by the decree of the holiest of all the councils, the Council of Nice."*

As in the matter of indulgences Luther offered a general opposition to the abuse before he was acquainted with the particular grounds of the argument, so was it in the question of the Pope's supremacy. It was not till after the publication of the above proposition that he applied himself earnestly to the subject, determined to be in readiness to maintain it, whether at Leipsig, should such be the final arrangement, or, if necessary, in the face of all Christendom. And thus was he compromised to a most important principle, which it was certain that he would defend with great power and boldness, and equally certain that he would never retract, but follow fearlessly

* "*Romanam ecclesiam aliis ecclesiis fuisse superiorem probatur ex frigidissimis decretis Romanorum pontificum; contra quæ sunt textus divinæ Scripturæ et historiæ approbatæ nulle centumque annorum et decretum Concilii Nicæni omnium sanctissimi.*"

into all its consequences, and derive from it new and still more dangerous doctrines—and all this through the importunate zeal of one who called and deemed himself a friend of the papacy. How immediately the investigations, into which Luther then entered, led him beyond the limits of his original proposition is proved by the passage from a letter to Spalatin already cited. From the question of the mere superiority of the Roman church he advanced very early in his inquiry to another: Whether the Pope were not Antichrist, or the apostle of Antichrist? He felt and expressed the strongest abhorrence of the decrees by which Christ had been so long crucified, and the people of Christ mocked and deluded; and he collected materials, even while the professions of obedience were upon his lips, for undisguised and implacable opposition to the spiritual tyranny.

In the mean time, the court of Saxony took alarm at the doctrine so nakedly propounded in his Thesis, and demanded an explanation of it. The first which he offered was not satisfactory; the apprehensions which he attempted to allay were founded entirely on considerations of a worldly policy, and were not touched by his arguments. He was not, however, thus shaken from his resolution; he addressed a letter to the Elector,* alleging many reasons why, in spite of the promise made to Miltitz, he was not bound to refuse the disputation or endure the insults of Eck, however devoted he was in his submission to the Roman See. Not long afterwards he endeavoured to infuse into the heart of Spalatin a nobler courage, built upon a loftier motive. “I beseech you, Spalatin, yield not to excessive fear, nor disturb your whole soul with human thoughts. You know that, if Christ had not taken charge of me and my work, I should have been

* March 13, 1519 (No. 126).

long ago destroyed, first by my Theses on Indulgences, then by my German Sermon, then by my Solutions and answer to Sylvester, lastly by my Acts, most of all by my journey to Augsburg. What mortal is there who did not either fear or hope that every one of these things would have been my ruin? I hear from Rome that the whole city is thrown into confusion by my Solutions and Dialogue, and that they propose to proceed against me, not by law, but by Italian subtilties (*Italicis subtilitatibus*), by which I understand them to mean poison or assassination. I repress much, on account both of our prince and university, which, were I elsewhere, I would vomit out against Rome, the desolator of the gospel and the church, which is indeed less properly Rome than Babylon. The truth of Scripture and of the church cannot be treated without giving offence to this beast.* Do not, therefore, expect me to rest in quiet and security, unless you would have me abandon theology altogether. Let my friends think me mad. This affair, if it be of God, will not end unless, even as Christ was forsaken by his disciples, so I too shall be deserted by my friends, and the truth be left desolate—yet will she defend herself by her own right hand, not by mine, nor by yours, nor by that of any other man; and to this hour have I looked forward from the beginning. But what if I shall perish? The world will not fall in pieces, nor any part of it. The men of Wittemberg by God's grace have now made such good proficiency, that they no longer stand in need of me. What would you? For my part, my only fear is, that I may not be found worthy to suffer death in such a cause; that blessing is reserved for better men—it will be refused to so degraded a sinner as myself. I have

* “Non potest Scripturæ et ecclesiæ veritas tractari nisi hæc bellua offendatur, &c.” The letter (No. 135) was written in May.

always told you that I am ready to retire hence if my presence here should seem in any respect to compromise my prince. Some day or other I shall certainly die; though in a German Apology just published I offer sufficient flattery both to the church and Pope of Rome, if that may be of any advantage to me!"*

Soon afterwards he composed for private distribution some explanatory proofs (probationes) of his thirteenth Thesis, in order to moderate the suspicions it had excited against him. In these he acknowledged without reserve the authority of the Pope and the obedience which was scripturally due to it, in common with all other established powers. Only he placed it on human, not on divine, foundations; and he supported his opinion by much reference to the records of antiquity, the canons of early councils, and the expressions of early fathers and popes. At the same time he pointed out the essential difference between the church and the court of Rome, and pleaded for that distinction the example of the princes assembled in Diet at Augsburg in 1518. Still it remained uncertain, whether he would be admitted to dispute at Leipsig or not. Thrice he addressed Duke George on the subject, and received no decided answer. However, he resolved to present himself at the disputation, and to be guided by the circumstances which might occur on the spot.

Thus, when Eck at Leipsig repeated his challenge to Luther, the latter was both prepared and desirous to accept it. But it was necessary for him first to obtain from the Duke the sort of safe-conduct or guarantee which was granted only to the disputants. Through the

* "*Quoniam jam edita vernacula quadam apologia satis adulator R. ecclesiæ et pontifici, siquid forte id prosit.*" This Apology was composed in fulfilment of the agreement with Miltitz.

intercession of Eck he did obtain it ; and the two parties proceeded to the combat with a spirit which was not perhaps softened by the conscious recollection of their ancient friendship. It is curious that both of them acted in this matter in opposition to the wishes of the most intelligent of their supporters. It was supposed that Eck would endanger his cause by this disputation, and Luther his person—the two objects indeed to which they seem respectively to have attached the *least* consideration. The leading partisans of the former, who were the bishop of the diocese and the theologians of the university, had exhausted their exertions to prevent the contest, through a judicious fear, not perhaps as to its immediate result, but as to the consequences of free discussion, ever in the end fatal to the weaker cause. The personal friends of Luther urged on him the insidious character of his opponent ; the impossibility of defending his positions, without advancing others offensive to the great body of his audience, offensive to the authorities at Rome, and, what was a still closer argument, offensive to the court of Saxony. Besides, the negotiations with Miltitz, which seemed to promise impunity for his past proceedings, were still in progress ; and the bull of excommunication, which had been suspended for almost a year over his head, might still be withdrawn. Nevertheless, both persisted—the one elated by the expectation of a temporary triumph over a renowned antagonist, and of the applause* if not the dignities which would doubtless reward the feat ; and probably trusting too, that, in the course of the debate, Luther would so far commit himself, on the subject of all others the most delicate and perilous, as to compel the Vatican at length to discharge

* Luther, in a letter of Oct. 13, 1519, to Spalatin, very characteristically describes Eck as : “ homo totus gloriaceus, glorianus, gloriensis et gloriosus.”

its thunders—the other, provoked by the defiance, confident in his cause and in his power to maintain it, and trusting to the continued protection of that heavenly Master, whose work, as he devoutly believed, he was performing. Thus—the former blinded by his vanity, or his zeal, or his ambition, to the mischief which he might inflict on his own principles; the latter resolved to establish his principles, even at the expense of his personal security—they advanced with very different feelings, but with equal determination, to this celebrated encounter.

It commenced on the 4th of July and lasted for ten days; and it turned more or less on the various doctrines asserted on either part in the thirteen Propositions. From the question, whether the Pope had the power of withdrawing souls from purgatory by indulgences, a discussion arose respecting the existence of purgatory. Luther did not deny this; nay, he even asserted his belief in it to amount to absolute knowledge, so that he felt every disposition to find proof of it in Scripture; yet he avowed that he could find none such; and, when various passages were adduced by Eck for that purpose, he suggested in every case a different interpretation. Howbeit, if such were his real opinion, it is difficult to reconcile his expressions of absolute faith in the doctrine with his inability to discover any foundation for it in that, which was his only acknowledged rule of faith.

The following was his proposition respecting indulgences: that, as they implied the abolition of sundry good works, it was absurd to maintain that they were a benefit to the church. This was to take safe ground; and as he admitted besides, in the course of argument, that his objections were not to the indulgences themselves so much as to the abuse of them, and that he was convinced of the infallibility of the church in matters of

faith ; and as Eck had avowed, even in a sermon to the people, that, though indulgences were not to be despised, yet no confidence should be placed in them ; there was little space for difference. Luther protested that, if other preachers had observed the same moderation, his very name would never perhaps have emerged from obscurity ; and thus the question deemed at first so very important—that by which the original feud had been occasioned—that which had been so furiously maintained by the ultra-papists as to endanger the very life of its assailant—already, within two years from the beginning of the controversy, was altogether abandoned and exploded by all possessing any pretensions to intelligence. “ Concerning indulgences, we are all but of the same opinion—in fact, the things are become almost ridiculous.”* Yet they had served their purpose in advancing by that very absurdity the cause of general improvement ; and even the short and violent stand which was made for them gave time for the investigation of more weighty topics.

A discussion respecting penance followed ; in which Eck maintained that the fear of punishment was a legitimate motive for repentance ; while Luther argued that, though this might occasion the cessation of evil works and even the performance of works outwardly good, yet more was required for divine acceptance—the love of holiness, the hatred of vice, an entire conversion of all the principles and feelings, and a perfect love of God. The question of absolution and satisfactions was more delicate, because it involved the prerogatives of the hierarchy ; for Luther on this point advanced, in opposition to the received opinions and practice : That, though God did sometimes convert eternal into temporal punishments,

* Luther to Spalatin, Aug. 15, 1519.

yet the remission of these remained at the mercy of God, and neither priest nor prelate had any power of dispensing with any, except such canonical inflictions as they could themselves impose; that there was no distinction in this respect between priest and bishop, who, according to St. Paul, were invested with equal authority. These positions, which closed the gates of purgatory and levelled an essential spiritual distinction, were not calculated to recommend their author to the court of Rome, or even to the favour of the German hierarchy.

But these were rather skirmishes than the main encounter. The ground on which the battle was really fought was the thirteenth proposition; and to this point the force of the disputants was the more strongly directed, as it was that which excited the most general interest, and promised consequences more lasting than the clamour and echoes of a verbal controversy. In this matter the sovereign authority of the Bishop of Rome over all other churches was admitted by both parties; but the point contested was, whether the right to this authority was divine or human. It rested with Eck to prove the former, and the dispute turned of course upon the much abused passage of the 16th chapter of St. Matthew.* I shall not pursue the arguments which were advanced on either side, and which have been so perpetually reiterated since that time. Suffice it to say that, when Eck discovered that the fair use of reason would not serve him for the overthrow of his antagonist, he had recourse to another expedient usual with the advocates of established evils: he endeavoured to raise a cry against the Reformer. The word heretic

* Verses 18 and 19.—“Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

would not alone have answered his purpose; it was now becoming somewhat too trite and vulgar, and was even associated in the feelings of the people with some favourable recollections. But it so happened—whether through the mere vituperations of the priesthood, or through some national antipathy, or through the repeated acts of frightful atrocity which had really characterized that contest, or through all these causes united—that the name of Bohemian, or Hussite, was one of suspicion, if not of hatred, among the German people. It was an object, therefore, to fasten *that* heresy upon Luther. This was not difficult; since some opinions both of Wiclif and Huss were similar to, if not identical with, some of Luther, and those had been formally condemned by the Council of Constance. Eck pressed this advantage, till Luther, after a powerful defence of his own tenet, was obliged to declare that it was more reasonable to suppose that the Acts of that Council had been corrupted, than that it had condemned a doctrine so manifestly in accordance with Scripture and St. Augustine.

Luther himself, in an account of this disputation, has called it “a loss of time rather than an inquiry after truth;” and, admitting the profane and scholastic erudition of his opponent, noticed the emptiness of all the arguments which he attempted to derive from Holy Writ.* “Yet must I confess, as I hope for God’s love, that we were conquered in clamour and gesticulation.” He relates besides that, after the conclusion of the controversy, Prince George, whose general demeanour and

* “Etsi est homo in literis humanis et opinionibus scholasticis varie et copiose eruditus, tamen S. S. Literarum ego inanem inveni disputatorem.” The name of Eck will appear so often in the course of this history, that the very words in which his great adversary has characterised him are important.

noble qualities he had previously* eulogised in the strongest expressions, entertained both Eck and himself at table with great condescension and courtesy; and in the freedom of private intercourse he remarked, “Whether it be by divine or human right, the Roman Pontiff is and still remains the highest Pontiff.” “And truly,” Luther adds, “said he this; and it was no slight sarcasm that he thus cast, with such signal moderation, upon our useless disputation.”

This was addressed to Spalatin on the 15th of the August following; and it might then suit the purpose of Luther to express, in that quarter, his conviction of the inutility of the debate, especially as it had not terminated with any ostensible triumph to himself or his cause; and as the means of immediate advantage to either party it might indeed be fruitless, since the universities of Erfurth and Paris, to which the decision was referred, were not likely to pronounce a hasty judgment. But the use of this disputation, as Luther well knew, lay in the public broaching of a question held in some measure sacred—in the removal of the fears, the scruples, the prejudices, the reverential awe, which surrounded it—in laying bare its approaches, and inviting all men to examine and handle it: thus, and thus only, could there be any hope of placing it upon its right understanding; for, though the progress of reason and virtue does sometimes seem, by its slow and timid movements and the

† “*Omnium maximè laudandus est illustrissimus Princeps Dux Georgius, qui vere principali clementia et munificentia nihil omisit, quod ad felicissimum hujus disputationis fructum facere posset, &c. . . .* Indolui optimum et piissimum Principem alienis ita patere et parere affectibus, quem videbam et expertus eram satis principaliter loqui, quando sua loquebatur.”—Luther to Spalatin, July 20, 1519. (No. 147) I cite these expressions for the same reason with those above.

violence of its occasional interruptions, to defy the calculations of human providence, and to throw despair on the aspirations of the wise and good, yet the surest method of promoting it is the free and unrestrained and persevering appeal to that last and greatest, though somewhat capricious tribunal, public opinion.

As might be expected in a contest so vigorously conducted, on a subject capable of such extensive and evasive reasoning, among hearers previously prejudiced on the one side or the other, and in the absence of any authorised judges, the victory was claimed by both parties. An intense interest had been excited during the progress of the disputation, not only among the spectators, who frequently and clamorously expressed their feelings, but among the students and citizens, in the hotels and all other places of public resort. The theologians of Leipzig did not conceal their bitterness against the strangers, occasioned no doubt by the suspicious tendency of their doctrines, and heightened by academical jealousy; for the schools of Wittenberg were now overflowing with students, who thronged thither, at the expense of the older institutions, from every part of Germany. Accordingly they extolled the talents of Eck and applauded his success. "It is Eck," as Luther himself wrote to Spalatin, "it is he who is in favour; it is he who triumphs and holds dominion, but only until we shall make our appeal to the public." "I have just been disputing at Leipzig" (so Eck, in a letter to Hoogstraten on July 24, 1519) "before a numerous audience of very learned men from every quarter, and have succeeded in lessening the influence of their doctrine even on the vulgar—among the learned it is almost entirely extinct. . . . Luther argued that some among the Bohemian tenets condemned at Constance were strictly Christian and evangelical, whereby he terrified and alienated many who previously

favoured him. . . . On St. Peter's day, in the absence of the prince, he preached in the hall of disputation a Hussite sermon, full of manifest errors. I addressed a large congregation in reply, and roused the people against his false doctrine." The inhabitants of the city were indeed as warm partisans as the divines of the university, and they showed their spirit by some acts of neglect and incivility felt and mentioned by Luther.

Yet he, on his part, seems to have lost nothing in general reputation either for learning or intellectual power by this dispute; and even his antagonist, who affected to despise and deride the laborious exertions of Carlstadt, dared not to refuse to Luther a qualified commendation. A more valuable testimony, and deserving greater notice, as entering more particularly into the personal qualities of the Reformer, is that of Petrus Mosellanus, who wrote, with much impartiality, two accounts of this disputation. In one of them (addressed to Julius Pflug) we find the following curious description:—"Martin is of a middle stature, thin and worn with anxiety and study, so that one may count almost all his bones, but of manly and fresh age and with a clear and loud voice. His knowledge of Scripture is so great that he has all at his fingers' end. He is so conversant with Greek and Hebrew that he can judge of the fidelity of interpretations. He possesses, too, a great abundance and command of words and facts; but is, perhaps, somewhat deficient in judgment and discretion in the use of them.* In his manners he is courteous and friendly, and has nothing stoical or supercilious about him, he can

* "*Judicium fortasse et utendi rationem in eo desideres.*" These words are omitted by Loescher, *Act. Reform.* t. iii. p. 247, and by Marheinecke (*cap. v.* p. 132), who probably followed Loescher. So is the word "*nugator*," a few lines below,—"*Festivus et jucundus nugator.*" Errors of this description on the part of Protestant writers are some-

accommodate himself to all occasions. In society he is a gay and pleasant trifler, lively and careless, and always of bright and joyous aspect, let his opponent threaten him never so fiercely; so that one can scarcely imagine this man to have undertaken such weighty matters without the aid of God. But the fault which almost all find with him is, that he is somewhat imprudent in reprehension, and more biting than is safe in an innovator in religious matters, or decorous in a theologian."

It was the immediate consequence of the disputation at Leipzig to multiply the enemies no less than the friends of Luther. So decided a proclamation of opposite opinions, so warmly and elaborately supported, excited many indifferent minds, and fixed many that were irresolute; so that several, who had been hitherto mere spectators of the strife, now enlisted as zealous partisans. Those Romanists who, through contempt of the obscure monk, had hitherto kept aloof, now perceived that there was much, both in the man and in his principles, to move their apprehensions. Those Reformers, who had been deterred by the boldness of the enterprise from lending it their support, now observed that the ground was daily growing firmer and more secure, and less accessible to the ministers of the Inquisition. The arguments which had been broached in public were repeated in the intercourse of private life. The dispute grew warmer, as it extended more widely and exercised the feelings no less than the understandings of men; and thus it became more and more certain, that the difference could not now be set at rest without some serious struggle, and that the result of that struggle must be some sort of reformation in the system of the church.

what unfortunate, as they expose them to plausible charges of partiality from their adversaries.

Immediately after the conclusion of the disputation Eck addressed (on the 23rd of July) a letter to the Elector of Saxony, exhorting him to discourage the pernicious doctrines of his professor and to cause his books to be burnt. Frederick replied, after some delay and with great moderation. In the mean time he sent the letter to Luther and Carlstadt, who treated it with controversial severity in an answer of the 18th of August. In the beginning of the November following* Eck published a powerful and elaborate reply, in which he comprehended not only such imputations against the tenets and person of Luther as were calculated for the effect of the moment, but also many of the arguments which, in the subsequent disputes, were urged with the greatest show of reason against the confessions of the Protestants.

It had been agreed, as has been mentioned, that the Acts of the Conference should not be made public; but Luther, who knew that his cause could only stand through general discussion, soon found means of evading this compact. He presently published, not indeed the Acts in question, but his own "Solutions" of the thesis,† with a concise account of the disputation. In this work he examined the authority of the fathers and of general councils; he pressed with great earnestness the doctrine of justification by faith; he boldly condemned the principle of indulgences as set forth in the Extravagant of Clement VI. and in the recent bull of Leo; and, while he professed his continued reverence for the See of Rome, he justified his argument respecting the foundation of its power. At the same time two new and powerful supporters declared their adhesion to his cause, and engaged their talents in its defence—Oecolampadius and

* Seckend., lib. i. sect.-26, § 61.

† "Resolutiones super Propositionibus Lipsiæ Disputatis."

Melancthon. The former, in a letter, under the name of "the ignorant Lutheran Canons," satirised the vain hypocritical ostentation of Eck in language deeply offensive to the object of his ridicule; the latter repelled an attack of that polemic with great spirit, and vindicated a narrative which he had written of the proceedings at Leipzig with sense and judgment.*

The most dangerous enemy roused by the disputation of Leipzig was Jerome Emser, a Swede, professor of canon law in that university. He was the most dangerous, because the most insidious enemy. The method he took was to pursue the malignant course of warfare suggested by Eck, and, by persuading men that a friendly understanding subsisted between Luther and the Bohemians, to involve him and his doctrines in the general obloquy which attached to theirs. It is true that the latter received letters of approbation and encouragement about this period from certain of the doctors of Prague; for they beheld with a natural interest the progress of principles which, whether identical with their own or not, were at least in avowed opposition to the despotism of Rome. No doubt they regarded Luther as a second Huss, destined to incur, through the same evangelical virtues, the same persecution. Emser smoothed his venomous insinuations by many personal compliments to Luther. The latter, indignant both at the charge itself and the duplicity of the accuser, rejected his flattery and confuted his reasoning;† and after boasting that

* I shall not now interrupt the narrative with any particular account of this distinguished pair, who will presently take so prominent a position among the heroes of this history.

† "De disputatione Lipsicensi, quantum ad Boemos obiter deflexa est, Epistola Hieronimi Emser"—addressed to the head of the Catholic church at Prague. The reply was entitled "Ad Ægocerotem Emserianum M. Lutheri Additio." . . . "Primum, mi Emser, omitto blandi-

he was receiving communications day by day from the ablest men in many countries, exhorting him to persevere in the truth, he broke out into the apostrophe—“What hapless and worthless theologians must you be, idols of this world, who, in your ignorance of Holy Writ, can defend the opinions of the church by no other arms than this: that you are fearful and angry and suspicious, like women and children, lest my doctrines should prove agreeable to heretics!” Emser had asserted that the Bohemians offered up sacrifices for Luther; but even this, he replied, was no argument that he loved them; since there were none for whom he himself offered more frequent and fervent prayers than for Eck and Emser, and even for the unhappy Tetzl: *cujus anima sit in pace!*

Notwithstanding this reply, the clamour was continued and inflamed with falsehood and calumny. It was carefully spread abroad by the doctors of Leipzig that Luther was born in Bohemia, educated at Prague, and imbued in his infancy with the doctrines of Wiclif. These inventions, frequently and confidently repeated, found for the moment some partial credit; and a sermon respecting the Eucharist, which he published towards the end of the year, afforded them some shadow of countenance. For in this he expressed a modest wish for a decree of a general council to the effect, “That the sacrament should be administered in both kinds to the people, as well as to the priests.” The cry was then redoubled.

loquentiam tuam, qua me virum judicas rara eruditione. Oscula Ischriotica dissimulo, quibus sub Boemorum persona mordes, me esse unum qui Sacras Literas vel solus attingam.” . . . He concluded however with some rather peaceful expressions: “*Silere cum pacificis sapius optavi; verum contra damnosos et furiosos satis adhuc mihi vivax est fiducia, largitore Christo. Amare volo omnes, formidare neminem.*” I would have peace with the peaceful; but against the wild and wicked I have still, by Christ’s bounty, confidence abundantly lively. I would love all men—yet in such manner as to fear no man.”

The Bishop of Misnia, by a public edict, censured the expression. Duke George complained to the Elector (Dec. 27, 1519) of the dangerous consequence of the doctrine and its close connexion with the heresies of Prague; while he insinuated that an intercourse was secretly maintained between the preacher and those spiritual rebels.

The Elector replied with his usual moderation. But the wrath of Luther broke out with unmeasured violence. And when the court of Saxony commanded him to suppress the reply which he had composed to the proclamation of the bishop, he addressed Spalatin* in a tone of lofty confidence which he had never yet assumed towards the friend of Frederick: "If I am to continue my lectures at all, I do not understand the counsel given me by you and others when you say that I am to lecture without giving offence to the Pope. The Scripture altogether condemns the abuse of holy things—but the Popes will never bear to hear of this. I have delivered and offered myself up in the name of God. His will be done! . . . What is it then that they will do with me? Take away my life? They can do this but once. Defame

* On Jan. 14, 1520. Four days before, he had written to the same on the subject of the Bohemian calumnies: "*Quid in aliis causis sint hac una facile cognoscitur. Lege quæso et reliqua de mysteriis monstrantiarum, item natiuitatis, educationis, parentelæ meæ. Spero adhuc fingent, me uxorem et filios in Boemia habere. . . .*" There is extant (Autographa Reformatorum, Ann. 1521) an oration of one John Anthony Modestus addressed to Charles against Luther, containing similar slanders: "*Martinus quidam Luterus homo, ut ejus vitæ institutum potest demonstrare non in Germania, sed in media Boemia natus, et educatus, impietatem sibi innatam non contentus, &c. . . .*" The author then dwells at great length on the evils which befel Bohemia through the heresy of Huss, and warns the Emperor against the revival of such horrors in Germany. Feb. 10, 1521.

me as a heretic? But was not Jesus Christ executed in the society of malefactors? Every time that I meditate on the passion of the Lord I feel profoundly afflicted that the temptation which I am now suffering seems to many so grievous. This can only be because we are unaccustomed to suffer—that is, to live like disciples of Christ. However, let them do what they will. The greater efforts they make against me, the more securely I laugh at their power. I am resolved to dread nothing in this matter, but to despise everything. And if I did not fear to compromise our prince, I would publish an apology full of confidence, to provoke those furies more and more and to insult the insensate rage that they bear against me.”

In the beginning of this letter he expressed his delight, however, that his enemies had so far shifted their ground of attack as to have now descended to a subject comparatively insignificant: “I vehemently rejoice and render thanks to God that my cause has made thus much progress and that my enemies have dismissed the other questions and descended to the double communion and my family connexions. I trust, through Christ’s mercy on my unworthiness, that I shall not perish for any opinion of dignity and consequence, such as free will, grace, the keys of the church—for, in seeking out those ridiculous charges against me, they seem to despair of their power to contend on higher subjects. As Christ was crucified under the title of the ‘King of the Jews,’ so may my cross be inscribed with the double communion—though I have neither commanded nor prohibited that practice, but only reasoned on it just as the scholastics themselves have reasoned before me.”

Luther wrote this in the spirit of an earnest Christian—but to his high church antagonists, whose views were

confined to the single object of working his destruction, it mattered little what weapon they turned against him, so the wound were mortal. And it happened at that moment, for reasons already alluded to, that no cry or slander was so likely to prove fatal to a religious innovator as that which should associate him with the name and crime of the Bohemians.

CHAPTER X.

THE BULL OF CONDEMNATION.

Luther's scriptural studies—sermon on the double communion—commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians—"Protestation" of fidelity—address to Charles V., to the Archbishop of Mayence, and the Bishop of Mersburg—operations of his enemies—universities of Cologne and Louvain—Erasmus to the Archbishop of Mayence—Eck goes to Rome to agitate against Luther—he is successful—and the Bull of Excommunication is composed—substance of the bull—remarks—Eck appointed Nuncio to publish the bull in Germany—Miltitz still perseveres in his expedients—he brings about a deputation of Augustinians to Luther—he seems to yield to them, when Eck arrives with the bull—interview between Miltitz and Luther—their agreement—Luther's consequent letter to the Pope—extracts from it—accompanied by his *Treatise de Libertate Christiana*—substance of it—disgrace and death of Miltitz—remarks on his negotiation.

THOUGH the polemical proceedings of Luther must occupy the foremost place in every history of the Reformation, as being those by which the changes were ostensibly brought about, yet must it never be forgotten that he was engaged, during all this noisy strife, in the production of works of a more strictly spiritual character. He persevered with his original zeal in assiduous application to Holy Scripture, thence deriving, not only nourishment to his piety, but continual additions to his knowledge. Through an impartial comparison of the practices of the church with the commandments of the Gospel, he was led on, step by step, from consideration to suspicion, from suspicion to condemnation. The spirit of inquiry, when once awakened in an earnest mind and animated by unfair opposition, knows no other bounds than the truth after which it searches; and

though, through human infirmity, it should sometimes mistake a shadow for the reality, it will still pursue that shadow with the same vehemence. The objects of his scrutiny multiplied as he advanced. The detection of one abuse led him unavoidably into the examination of another. For indeed those doctrines and practices of the church which he thought unscriptural were all very closely connected by the common motive on which they were founded—the aggrandisement of the sacerdotal order. Thus he proceeded about this time from the question of the double communion to express some doubts about the number of the sacraments, about auricular confession, and even about the distinctive office of the priesthood.

In the disputation at Leipzig he signified a blind belief in the existence of purgatory. On the 7th of the succeeding November he wrote to Spalatin on that same subject as follows: “Though I know very well that there is a purgatory among us, yet I am not so sure that all Christians acknowledge it. Thus much is certain, that no man is a heretic for not believing in purgatory. Nor is it an article of faith; since the Greeks, who do not believe in it, have never for that reason been accounted heretics. . . .”

In his public lectures and discourses he continued to interpret various portions of the Old and New Testament.* And it was in the autumn of 1519 that he published a work which is by many considered the most valuable, the most replete with evangelical light and truth, of all his compositions, and which was received with the most general admiration by his contemporaries—the Commen-

* “Sum accinctus operi enarrandi Epistolas et Evangelia, sane occupatissimus. . . .” Epist. to Spal., Nov. 7, 1519. In another letter to the same, of Feb. 8, Luther mentions the interpretation of the Psalms as another among his manifold occupations.

tary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Yet even here he did not altogether abstain from controversial topics; and the high tone, moral and theological, in which this production was written, gave additional weight to the censures which it contained on ecclesiastical corruptions. He expounded therein at great length his doctrine of justification, and took great pains to prove that, whatever value he might set on faith, charity was by no means excluded from his principles—since this grace essentially contributed to the moral perfection of man, which was the end of the law of Christ.

In the allusions that he made to the iniquities of Rome he failed not to reiterate his wonted expressions of obedience. At the same time he insisted strongly on the broad distinction between the church and the court of Rome—the one as being indeed holy and catholic, the other as of this world, both in its origin and its vices.* Doubtless this was a convenient ground to take for the destruction both of the one and the other; because it was not possible, as they then stood, to draw any definite or generally intelligible line between them; and because the Church was in fact the sufferer by all the crimes and scandals imputed to the court.

In the January following he issued a sort of “protestation” of fidelity, in fulfilment of his engagements to Miltitz. Herein he declared his determination to live and die an obedient son of the Catholic church; he repeated his promise to preserve silence if his adversaries would permit him; he expressed his desire to teach only pure Christianity, to engage in public disputation,

* In a letter to Radheimer and Carlstadt on general ecclesiastical matters, written in September 1519 (No. 157), Luther said, “*Judicium interim sequare, quo principes Germaniæ in novissimis comitiis recte, sancte et auguste discreverunt inter R. Ecclesiam et R. Curiam.*” And he followed up this distinction in very strong language.

to submit to the sentence of any impartial universities; to appear, under a safe-conduct, before any judge, secular or spiritual; while he protested against the cry of heresy which had been so slanderously raised against him, and deprecated any hasty and invidious condemnation.* He made these declarations in very guarded language; and, while they compromised him to no positive act of concession, they were intended to retard the crisis of excommunication, and to gain perhaps some few additional months for the still unrepressed diffusion of his principles.

By the side of this document he published, on the 15th of the same month, an address to the recently elected emperor Charles V. That young prince owed his imperial crown to the magnanimous disinterestedness of Frederick of Saxony; and upon that circumstance, and perhaps too upon his age, which seemed to preclude any bigoted adhesion to ancient principles or acknowledged abuses, Luther built some natural hopes of protection. At any rate, it was the part of common prudence to represent to him in a favourable light those acts and doctrines, which had doubtless been painted in far other colours by the papal party, and which could not long escape his official cognisance. Accordingly, in a respectful but not abject strain, Luther implored the imperial protection against the violence of his enemies. Without making any direct allusion to the Pope, he represented how he had been dragged from the obscurity of his monastic occupations into an unwelcome notoriety; how the opinions and practices which he had been compelled to attack were only human opinions and human practices, having their source in avarice. He proceeded to relate what promises he had made of submission and

* Seckendorf, l. i. sect. 27. § 65.

silence and even of recantation, should he be convicted of any error; but that his enemies still pursued him, bent to destroy, not him only but the whole Gospel along with him.* Wherefore, his only remaining hope was now placed in the mercy and justice of the Emperor; and even from him he implored no greater grace than a fair and impartial hearing, before he should consent to his condemnation. In order to add to this supplication some dignity drawn from the more sacred annals of the church, he compared his own condition to that of Athanasius, a holy and persecuted suppliant at the court of Constantius.

About the same time he addressed other letters, in the same strain of elevated moderation, to the Archbishop of Mayence and the Bishop of Mersburg. He received replies from both. The former, after declaring that he had not read his works, on which he left all judgment to his superiors, exhorted him, without any asperity, to refrain from vain and biting controversy, and to employ his talents in more peaceful and reverential methods of advancing the religion of Christ. The latter conveyed the same counsel in terms of more severity, and expressed a strong condemnation both of his doctrine and his style.

* The following passage deserves to be cited: "Editi sunt a me nonnulli libelli quibus multorum et magnorum conflavi mihi invidiam et indignationem. Unde duplici tutus esse presidio debui; primum, quod invitus in publicum veni, nec nisi aliorum vi et insidiis prodiens scripsi quicquid scripsi, nihil unquam ardentioribus votis expetens, quam ut in angulo meo laterem; deinde, quod teste conscientia mea ac optimorum virorum judicio nonnisi evangelicam veritatem studui evulgare adversus superstitiosas humanæ traditionis opiniones. Propter quam tertius jam finitus prope annus ex quo patior sine fine iras, contumelias, pericula, et quicquid adversarii possunt excogitare mali. Frustra interim veniam peto, frustra silentium offero, frustra pacis conditiones propono, frustra crudiri meliora postulo: unum est quod in me paratur, tantum ut extinguar, cum universo evangelio."

While Luther was employed in these unprofitable endeavours to soothe and conciliate the directors both of church and state, his enemies were taking various measures for his destruction with great activity, and, so far as their immediate object was concerned, with success. They still imagined that a bull of excommunication would be sufficient to overthrow the heretic and extinguish the opinions; to this they chiefly looked as the result of their exertions. The Legate Gaetan had induced the university of Cologne, as early as Aug. 30, 1519, to publish a condemnation of the works of Luther—but the authority of Cologne was already much weakened in Germany by its perverse persecution of Reuchlin. James Hoogstraten, a Dominican already mentioned, had much influence at Louvain; and to this it is ascribed that that university presently followed (on the 7th of November) the example of Cologne. But these seats of learning were so filled with monastic men and principles, as to be scarcely pervious to any light of sense or reason; and the sort of instinctive resistance which they had so long opposed to the reviving hopes of religious and intellectual improvement, though its strength was abating year by year, lost nothing of its obstinacy and bitterness.

No writer had ever assailed those strongholds of bigotry with greater force than Erasmus, and he had not yet begun to tremble at his own virtue. In the course of the same November he wrote from Louvain a very manly letter to the Archbishop of Mayence, in which he warmly denounced the vices of the monastic establishments—their ignorance, their avarice, the impudent inventions of their craft and superstition. He went farther; he did not shrink from the mention of Luther, and expressed or insinuated a favourable opinion of his character and

objects.* If Erasmus had foreseen that this letter would be immediately published, he would have employed, perhaps, on this latter subject, even more guarded language. Yet so it proved. The composition was scarcely written when it fell into the hands of a very bold and intelligent defender of Luther, to whom more particular reference will presently be made—Ulrich of Hütten. He seized the advantage thus presented, and put it into general circulation. And it is possible that the commendation of Erasmus, so high an authority, at so critical a moment, when so many impartial and enlightened minds were still suspended, may have served the cause more effectually than it was damaged by his subsequent hostility. It is certain that it far overbalanced the suspicious decisions of the two universities.

When Eck perceived that he was making no progress towards his object by the angry controversies, which followed the disputation of Leipzig, he thought to accelerate the catastrophe by his presence at Rome. Accordingly, under some plea of personal business, he went thither in the beginning of 1520, burning with apostolical zeal.†

* “*Est in manibus aliquorum egregia epistola Erasmi ad Cardinalem Moguntinum. . . ubi me egregie tutatur, ita tamen, ut nihil minus quam me tutari videatur, sicut solet pro dexteritate sua.*”—Luther to Langus, Jan. 26, 1520.

† There exists a curious letter of Eck, written from Rome on May 3, 1520, showing the diligence and bustle of his proceedings—what conferences he had held with the Pope and his cardinals, what lights he had given them, what more he had yet to perform, what promises he had received, what friends he had made! “*Eckii consilium sequetur Sanctissimus et omnes episcopi se subscribent. Bonum fuit me venisse hoc tempore Romam, quod alii parum pernoverunt errores Lutheranos. . . . Stetimus nuper papa, duo cardinales, Doctor Hispanus et ego per quinque horas in deliberatione hujus negotii singuli. Rogabamur omnes dare sententias. . . . Heri fui cum S. D. N. in negotio Lutherano. . . . cras iterum aditurus pontificem. . . . Cardinales mihi favorabiles sunt S.*

He found there a numerous party, composed for the most part of Dominicans, who were as anxious as himself for the excommunication of Luther. His exhortations animated them; and by the assiduous employment of every sort of expedients, they at length prevailed upon the Pope to summon a congregation on that subject. Gaetan and Prierias were among the members of this body, as well as the Professor of Ingolstadt; and as it was moved by one spirit, it began with perfect unanimity by passing sentence of condemnation upon Luther. But when it advanced to the next step, to decide on the manner of carrying this sentence into effect, considerable differences arose out of the different views of ecclesiastical policy. The theologians advocated the more violent, the lawyers the more cautious, measures. The former would have assumed, that the heresy was already scandalous and notorious, and hastened at once to issue the anathema. The latter maintained that the defendant should first be cited to answer to the charge—that the forms of justice at least should be observed. Neither party was disposed to yield; so a middle course was adopted. It was determined, on the one hand, to condemn the doctrine without any further proceedings; but, on the other, to allow the culprit a certain time for recantation. Other disputes followed; but at length, after ten days of hard labour and four formal consultations, those choice churchmen, the collective learning, sagacity and craft of the court of Rome, produced (on the 15th of June, 1520) the most celebrated, if not the vilest, composition that has ever issued from the laboratory of the Vatican.

“Arise, oh Lord,* and judge thy cause! Be thou not Crucis; S. Sixti. Campeggio. . .” He mentions that he had found Rome a much better place than it was reported to be.

* “Exsurge Domine, et judica causam tuam. Memor esto improprie-

unmindful of the reproaches which fools cast against thee all day long; incline thine ear to our prayers; since wolves have arisen seeking to destroy the vineyard, of which thou alone hast trodden the wine-press, and didst commit the charge of it, before thy ascension to the Father, its care, government and administration to Peter, as to its head and thine own vicar, and to his successors, as of a church triumphant. But a wild boar is striving to root it out of the forest and a singular beast is consuming it. Arise, Peter, &c. . . . And thou also, Paul, who hast enlightened and illustrated the Roman Catholic church by thy teaching and thy martyrdom. For a new Porphyry is risen up among us; and as he of old calumniated the holy apostles, so does this man dare, after the fashion of heretics, to reproach, bite and lacerate the holy pontiffs our predecessors. . . . Lastly, let all the saints arise, and the whole universal church, . . . and together with the aforesaid apostles intercede with the omnipotent Lord, that he will deign to purge away the errors from his fold, and to exile every heresy, and to preserve the peace and unity of his hallowed church."

The Pope then expressed his affliction that so many and grievous errors should have arisen, and that too among the Germans, a people whose faith had been approved by their struggles against the Bohemian schismatics, and more lately by the decisions of some of their

reriorum tuorum, eorum quæ ab inspiratibus fiunt tota die. Inclina aurem tuam ad preces nostras etc. . . . Exsurge Peter, et pro pastorali tua cura præfata tibi divinitus demandata intende in causam S. B. ecclesiæ matris omnium ecclesiarum etc. . . . Exsurgat denique omnis sanctorum et reliqua universalis ecclesia. . . . Exsurgat, inquam, præfata S. Ecclesia Dei et una cum beatissimis App. præfatis apud Deum Omnipotentem intercedat, ut, purgatis ovium suarum erroribus eliminatisque à fidelium finibus hæresibus universis, ecclesiæ suæ sanctæ pacem et unitatem conservare dignetur."

universities. Then were enumerated forty-one erroneous doctrines of Luther, and designated as “pestiferous, pernicious, scandalous, seductive of pious and simple minds, opposed to all charity, to all reverence for the holy Roman church, to obedience, the nerve of ecclesiastical discipline, the fountain of all virtues, the surest test of faith.”

He next related how a congregation had been appointed at Rome to decide on this matter; and how it had condemned the above doctrines. He boasted of the paternal clemency with which he had summoned the offender to Rome; and declared his appeal to the council to be in itself an act of heresy, according to the constitutions of Pius and Julius II. He then proceeded to pronounce sentence of excommunication according to the usual forms, only granting to Luther an indulgence of sixty days to return to his senses, to destroy his own works, and publicly renounce his doctrine. “And if any one shall presume to oppose this, let him know that he will incur the indignation of Almighty God and of the blessed Peter and Paul his apostles.”*

That the publication of the bull at that moment was an act of impolicy, it would not be fair to infer from its failure. Leo founded his hopes of success on such circumstances as he could calculate. He placed great trust in the supposed disposition of the Emperor; and he drew favourable conclusions from some expressions of the Elector which had lately been made known to him—ex-

* The preceding clause is this, and let it pass as a specimen of this precious document: “Nulli ergo omnino hominum liceat hanc paginam nostræ damnationis, reprobationis, rejectionis, decreti, declarationis, inhibitionis, voluntatis, mandati, hortationis, obsecrationis, requisitionis, monitionis, assignationis, concessionis, condemnationis, subjectionis, excommunicationis, et anathematizationis infringere, vel ei ausu temerario contraire.”

pressions indeed sufficiently guarded, in which that prince, while he disclaimed any adhesion to the doctrines of Luther, yet demanded for him an impartial trial, as the only means of contenting the people of Germany. This language, properly interpreted, would not certainly have led the Pope to conclude that Frederick would countenance any peremptory measures against his subject; but being willing perhaps to deceive himself in this matter, or being deceived by his courtiers,* he accepted the disclaimer of the Elector and overlooked the rest. Indeed, the respectful mention made by Frederick of the people of Germany might not be altogether intelligible to a spiritual despot. He may not have conceived the force, he may not even have comprehended the meaning, of public opinion; he may have supposed that, when the princes were on his side, there could be nothing serious against him, and this notion may have misled him—if, indeed, he was misled; but it seems very questionable whether, in the midst of many difficulties, he did not at last choose the least. If it was really intended to excommunicate Luther, it was wiser to discharge the bolt at that than at any later moment. And to have abandoned, after so many vaunts and menaces, that hope of overwhelming him, would have amounted to a confession that the grand engine of the papal authority, the last resource of the apostolical indignation, was become obsolete and useless. But, however this may be, one thing at least is certain—the means, which were chosen by Leo to promulgate his bull and make it acceptable to the German nation, were the most unfortunate that

* Fra Paolo declares, I know not on what authority, that Leo was forced into this measure by the zeal of his counsellors; that his own policy was to treat the whole affair with contempt and leave it to fall of itself; and that he reproached himself with having done too much rather than too little, even before the publication of the bull.

could possibly have been suggested. He appointed no other than Eck as his nuncio for that purpose; to this most virulent enemy and calumniator of the popular culprit he intrusted the weapon for his correction. The execution of this sentence, which ought to have worn at least some show of impartiality and clemency, was committed to a bitter partisan. This looked more like vengeance than like justice, and was calculated to fan the flame of spiritual insubordination. However blind a congregation of Romans might be to this necessary consequence, Eck at least, through a nearer acquaintance with local circumstances, ought to have taken a sounder view. But he was not more clear-sighted than the veteran courtiers of the Vatican. Elated by the most selfish vanity, he accepted the office as an honour and a triumph, and set out with puerile exultation to inflict, as he imagined, the fatal blow upon his devoted adversary.

In the mean time, while both parties were thus preparing for collision, the one by enlarging his means of defence, the other by urging an immediate assault, and things were manifestly hastening to a crisis, Miltitz was still in Germany, pursuing, as well as he was able, his vision of pacification. In the first instance, he made repeated attempts to carry into effect the original, but now almost forgotten, arrangement, that the affair should be decided before some ecclesiastical tribunal in Germany. The Archbishop of Treves was the prelate least objectionable to both parties, and Miltitz importuned him to undertake the task. He seems at first to have consented, but he presently withdrew from what was indeed becoming day by day a more difficult office. The negligence of the Pope, who certainly was far from zealous in furthering the scheme of Miltitz, furnished the prelate with a sufficient plea for his refusal—that he

had never received from Rome any formal act to authorise his judicial interference. Indeed, that expedient was now entirely hopeless. Whatever promise of conciliation it may have held out before the disputation at Leipzig was by that event annihilated. The spirits of both parties were too highly inflamed, not so much by the debate itself as by the misrepresentations and invectives which grew out of it, to be composed by any even the most impartial mediation.

That negotiation having thus fallen to the ground, Miltitz had recourse to another device. The Augustinian monks held a chapter general at Eisleben on the 28th of August, the day of their saint and patron. The formidable bull, which had been so elaborately composed at Rome more than two months before, was not yet arrived in Germany. There seemed still a moment remaining for intercession, and the nuncio snatched at it. He appeared at the congregation at Eisleben in his character of conciliator, and exhorted the monks to mediate with their refractory brother. He represented to them how much the honour of their Order was interested in the peaceful settlement of this matter, and how great a scandal would fall upon the whole body should any member be excommunicated; and he insinuated how acceptable a favour they would confer on the Holy See, if they could recal this wanderer to the fold of his forefathers.

They listened and were persuaded; and immediately deputed two, the most dignified of the Order, to confer with Luther on the subject. One was Wenceslaus Link, who had succeeded Staupitz in the office of Vicar-general, the other Staupitz himself. They arrived with several brothers in their train at Wittenberg, and had an amicable conference with Luther. In the course of it they readily admitted that he had much reason on

his side, and inveighed very honestly against the established abuses. But they urged with still greater force the danger of resistance, and magnified the terrors of the pontifical indignation.

Luther yielded, or seemed to yield. He promised to write another letter to Rome, no less respectful and obsequious than the former. And Miltitz again flattered himself with the vain fancy that he had succeeded in his mission, at least sufficiently to save his own credit at Rome. At that moment Eck arrived at Leipzig, bearing the bull of excommunication! And so it proved that these two zealous servants of the See, equally interested, from personal if from no better motives, in the triumph of their master and the extinction of the heresy, had yet so laboured for their joint purpose, as to counteract each other's measures: and doubtless each of them held the other to be a very dangerous friend, if not a positive traitor, to their common cause.

Miltitz was not even thus entirely discouraged. He immediately sought an interview with Luther, to which the other consented. It took place at Lichtenberg on the 14th of October, and it was then agreed that Luther on his side should adhere to the promise made to the Augustinians, from which the arrival of the bull had of course absolved him; and that Miltitz, on his, should employ his utmost exertions at Rome to procure the revocation of the sentence, before the expiration of the period allowed for retractation. It was arranged, besides, that his promised letter of humiliation should bear the date of the 6th of September, a fortnight earlier than the publication of the bull, to the end that the submission conveyed in it might not appear the effect of fear, but the genuine result of a pure affection towards his spiritual father. This was the last resource of a defeated and disappointed diplomacy. Such little expedients

were not suited to a great occasion, nor could they possibly produce even a passing effect on the progress of the Reformation. Petty artifices like this might have availed perhaps to terminate a difference between two prelates, or reconcile some monastic squabble; but they were out of place and utterly contemptible when applied to arrest the conflict now rising between two mighty principles, and to avert the impending insurrection of half the church. In fact, they were no more than the fragments on which the nuncio hoped to rescue his own slight character from the wreck of his negotiation.

Howbeit both parties proceeded to act on this agreement. Luther immediately composed a letter abounding in expressions of personal respect and deference towards the reigning Pontiff, which certainly were undeserved and probably insincere; but at the same time, as if to make amends to his conscience for the violence thus offered it, he gave vent to his hearty indignation against the Court of Rome, and exposed, in the most fearless language, the enormous iniquities of Rome. The following passages represent the character of this remarkable document:—

“For my part I am sensible that whenever I have spoken of you personally I have used magnificent expressions of praise. Had I done otherwise I should have justified the opinion of my enemies, and should now have desired nothing more than to recant such rashness and impiety. Your reputation, so universally celebrated, and the blameless report of your life, places you above attack, even from the most powerful quarter. I am not so silly as to impugn one whom every man praises; but it is rather my principle to spare even those whom public report has blackened. . . . But in regard to your See, which is called the court of Rome, and which neither you nor any other man can deny to

be more corrupt than any Babylon or Sodom, and which is, in my opinion, dead in impiety beyond hope of recovery or revival, I have indeed expressed my abhorrence of it, and my indignation that, under your name and the pretext of the Roman Church, the people of Christ should be thus mocked; and so I have resisted it, and will resist it so long as the spirit of faith shall live within me. Not that I am striving after impossibilities; not that I hope that any progress can be made towards the setting in order of that Babylon by my single endeavour against the rage of such a host of sycophants; but because it is a duty that I owe to my brethren committed to my charge to moderate the prevalence and virulence of the Roman pestilence. For nothing, as you know, has for many years proceeded from Rome and inundated the world, except a desolation of things, bodies and souls, and the worst examples of the worst crimes. All this is clearer than daylight; and the Roman church, once the holiest of all, is become a most licentious den of robbers, a brothel of all others the most infamous, the kingdom of sin, of death and of hell, so that nothing could be added to its iniquity even by the appearance of Antichrist.

“Meanwhile thou, Oh Leo! sittest like a lamb in the midst of the wolves, like Daniel surrounded by lions, and thou dwellest like Ezekiel among the scorpions. What resistance canst thou alone offer to those monsters? Thou hast three or four very learned and excellent cardinals, but what are these among so many? You would all perish by poison should you presume so much as to deliberate on a remedy. The court of Rome is at an end. The wrath of God has wrought its destruction. It detests councils, it fears reformation, it cannot mitigate the rage of its impiety, and it has accomplished the elegy of its mother, wherein it is written, ‘We have

waited upon Babylon, and she is not healed : let us forsake her.' Wherefore I have always lamented that thou, who art worthy of a better age, shouldst have been Pontiff in this; for the court of Rome deserves not thee, and such as thee, but rather Satan himself, who indeed is rather the Prince of Babylon than thou.

"Yet, to confess the truth, it never entered into my heart to inveigh against the court of Rome, or to engage in any disputation concerning it. I despaired entirely of any such attempt, and devoted myself to the peaceful study of sacred literature, for the advantage of my brother Christians round about me; and as I was making some progress in these occupations, Satan opened his eyes, and cast them upon John Eck, his servant, the distinguished foe of Christ, and excited him, through the irresistible lust of vain glory, to drag me into this unexpected field of contention, ensnaring me by a single unimportant expression respecting the primacy of the Roman church, which escaped from me unadvisedly. Hereupon this vapouring Thraso, foaming and gnashing, vaunted that he would undertake any enterprise for the glory of God, and the honour of the Holy Apostolical See; and, inflated by that authority of thine which he was about to abuse, he looked for a certain victory; not indeed that he was so eager about the primacy of Peter as about his own primacy among the theologians of the age, towards which it would be no small step, he thought, to lead Luther in triumph. But when the sophist failed in this, the man was disturbed by incredible rage; for he perceived that, if any offence was done to Rome by me, it originated in himself and was the fault of himself alone."

Luther then proceeded to describe with how good a prospect of peace the negotiation with Miltitz was proceeding, when Eck interrupted it by the disputation at

Leipzig: whence he exhorted the Pope—addressing him by the somewhat familiar appellation of *Mi Leo!*—to learn that of all foes the most dangerous was a flatterer; and, after delivering some other counsels in a similar strain, he thus concluded:—

“Perhaps it is impertinent to appear to be lecturing so great a chief, by whom all others should be taught, and from whom, as your pestilential sycophants boast, the very thrones of judges receive sentence. But I emulate St. Bernard in his book to Eugenius, which every pontiff ought to know by heart; for it is not through any officiousness in teaching that I do this, but through that pure and faithful solicitude which makes us, beyond all measure, anxious for our neighbour, nor admits any consideration of dignity or indignity when his safety and interests are concerned; and as I know that your Holiness is tossed about at Rome in a sea of dangers, and in a condition of such extreme misery that you need the slightest succour from the least among your brethren, I do not think myself out of place if I forget for a while your majesty, while I fulfil the office of charity. In a matter so serious and so perilous I will not flatter; and if you are unable to understand that in such a case to be your friend is to be the best of all your subjects, there lives One who does understand it, and who will judge accordingly. . . .”

In the last sentence of this very dignified and eloquent composition he presented to the Pope a little tract, dated on the 6th April, “On Christian Liberty” (*De Libertate Christiana*). The principal object of this work was to confirm and illustrate the doctrine of justification by faith; to derive from it its most obvious consequences, religious and moral; and to apply them, directly or by implication, to the actual condition of the church. One position, which he endeavoured in the course of it to establish,

was the equal participation of all Christians in the sacerdotal office; and though he did not press this opinion to its full extent, though he maintained that it was neither possible, nor, if possible, proper for all to exercise that common right,* though he inferred from it the necessity, not of the abolition of the clergy nor even of the monastic orders, but only of the thorough spiritual regeneration of both, yet the principle, which levelled the divine foundation of the sacerdotal prerogatives, could not be so softened or disguised, as to become acceptable to the Roman hierarchy. Nor was this offence mitigated by some severe animadversions contained in the succeeding paragraphs:—"That, through the prevalence of the ecclesiastical tyranny, all knowledge of Christian grace, faith, and liberty, had fallen to the ground; that the ministers of Christ ought to be discreet and faithful, and so to rule the people of Christ as not to offend their conscience or their faith, or to drive them, through the loss of their faith, into the polluting doctrine of justification by works:† yet that this cannot

* "Nam etsi verum est nos omnes æqualiter sacerdotes esse, non tamen possumus, nec, si possemus, debemus omnes publice servire et docere. Sic Paulus, 1 Corinth. iv. Sic nos existimet homo, sicut ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei. Ac dispensatio ista nunc in tantam pompam potestatis et terrificam quandam tyrannidem evasit, ut nec gentium nec ulla mundi imperia queant ei conferri. Quasi laici aliud quiddam quam Christiani sint, &c." Again: "Hinc omnes in Christo sumus sacerdotes et reges, quicumque in Christum credimus. . . . Quod ad regnum attinet, quivis Christianus per fidem sic magnificatur super omnia, ut spirituali potentia prorsus omnium Dominus sit, ita ut nulla omnino rerum possit ei quicquam nocere, imò omnia subiecta coguntur servire ad salutem. Sic Paulus, Rom. viii. dicit, &c."—De Libertate Christiana.

† Yet the following passage in this tract proves that it would not be fair to impute to Luther a contempt for the works of the Law, except as means of justification:—"Non liberi sumus pro fide Christi at operibus, sed ab opinionibus operum,—*i. e.* à stultâ præsumptione justifica-

be avoided when faith is condemned by silence, and the constitutions of men are alone inculcated, as has been done hitherto, through the pestilent, impious, soul-destroying traditions of our Pontiffs, and the opinions of our theologists, whereby souls innumerable have been ensnared and dragged to hell, through the manifest agency of Antichrist.”

It is not probable that either of these documents was at all satisfactory, even to the fondly-cherished hopes of Miltitz; but they contained some expressions at least of personal reverence towards Leo, and some professions of attachment to the Catholic church. Besides, there was now no chance of obtaining, by any further expedients, any less equivocal proofs of humiliation; so the nuncio resolved to turn what he had secured, if possible, to some account. He prepared to depart for Rome and lay these results of his embassy at the feet of the Pontiff. He imagined perhaps that his influence reviving with his presence would enable him to restore the spirit of conciliation to the councils of the Vatican; but this could not have been. The war was openly declared, and it was impossible to retrace the steps so lately taken with dignity, or even decency; but had it been otherwise there was no disposition to retrace them. The more violent party had gained the ascendancy. It was become the policy of the court of Rome to resort to extreme measures; and it was the fashion of the moment to ascribe the recent progress of the heresy and the diffi-

tionis per opera quæsitæ. Fides enim conscientias nostras redimit, rectificat et servat, qua cognoscimus justitiam esse non in operibus, licet opera abesse neque possint neque debeant—sicut sine cibo et potu et universa corporis istius mortalis opera esse non possumus; non tamen in iis justitia nostra sita est, sed in fide—nec tamen illa ob id contemnenda sunt aut omittenda.”—Where the reader will observe that the doctrine is much sounder than the analogy by which it is defended.

culties in repressing it to the unworthy devices and degrading compromises of the nuncio.

Having ascertained these circumstances, and perceiving how strongly the current was running against himself and his diplomacy, Miltitz abandoned at once the hopeless negotiation. His death followed almost immediately, and the story that he was drowned, while attempting to cross the Rhine in a state of intoxication, is accredited by the loose and licentious tenor of his moral habits. In recompence for his endeavours after peace, and his many ingenious expedients to close the breach between two angry parties, he reaped the harvest commonly allotted to unsuccessful mediators—the suspicion and contempt of both. The tone in which he is mentioned by Roman Catholic historians is not more insulting than that, in which Luther wrote respecting him, even while the affair was pending. Nevertheless, the principle on which his measures were conducted was founded in a deeper knowledge of the feelings of the German people and of the character of Luther than that which took its place in the deliberations of the Vatican. And had he been sent on his pacific mission some twelve months earlier, and had he been honestly supported, as he was not, by a corresponding spirit at Rome, his labours might not have been thus altogether fruitless; he might have somewhat retarded, he might have directed perhaps into some other channel, the stream of the coming Reformation;—to perform more than this was beyond the cunning of any earthly policy.

CHAPTER XI.

RECEPTION OF THE BULL.

Luther's address to the Emperor and German nobility ; some account of this work—his tract on the Babylonish captivity—containing an inquiry into the sacraments of the Roman church—connexion between doctrinal and practical abuses—some account of Ulrich of Hütten—Epistles of Obscure Men—his misfortunes and death—of Hartmuth of Cronberg—his address to the four mendicant orders—of Francis of Sickingen—his character and death—of Sylvester of Schaumburg—his offer of protection to Luther, and the use that the latter made of it—Luther to Spalatin—to the Cardinal of Santa Croce—the two letters not inconsistent—the arrival of the bull, together with a letter to Frederick—Eck the nuncio—it was rejected at Leipzig—at Erfurth—at Wittemberg—remarks on the result of Eck's labours—warning to the Pope contained in Frederick's letter to Teutleben—Hütten to the German people—Luther's position and resolution—his attack on Eck and vindication of Huss and the Bohemians—his "Confession"—his appeal to a general council justified—his tract against the Execrable bull of Antichrist—quotations—his assertion of the condemned articles—the bull in some places received, and Luther's writings there burnt—therefore Luther in his turn burns the bull and all the decretals, &c. &c. with it—he publishes his reasons for this act, instancing various heretical propositions extracted from the decretals—his address to the students on the following day, exhorting them to withdraw from the church, as they valued their salvation.

THE faint departing efforts of Miltitz did not seriously divert the attention of Luther, nor blind him for one moment to his real position. He saw that he was on the eve of a mortal struggle, which no stratagems could avert, and he was not remiss in preparing for it. Towards the end of June he published an address to the Emperor and the German nobility, on the Improvement of the Christian Condition ; and, to give it full efficacy among

his compatriots, he published it in German. In this composition he directed his arguments principally against the external system of the church, and assailed the foundations of its despotism. After an eloquent exordium, in which he warned those potentates by historical example and holy admonition to distrust their own powers and place their confidence in God—"The Romanists" (he observed) "have built three walls around them. First, they say, that the secular power has no control over them, since the spiritual is above the secular. Secondly, they resolve to inflict punishment on those who may oppose them on scriptural grounds, under the plea that it belongs to no one to interpret Scripture except the Pope. Thirdly, when threatened with a council, they pretend that no one can convoke a council except the Pope. Now may God help us, and give us one of the trumpets with which the walls of Jericho were blown down, that we may in like manner blow down these straw and paper walls. We will attack the first wall first."

To this effect he argued that all Christians without distinction have a share in the spiritual being (*wesen*); that all are consecrated to the priesthood by baptism, though it is not becoming in every one to exercise that office; that the rank and precedence annexed to the office only attach to the minister as long as he is in the actual discharge of it; and that, when not so engaged, he sinks again into the mere citizen or peasant. "We have one baptism and one faith, and it is that which constitutes a spiritual person. The unction, the tonsure, the ordination, the consecration conferred by a bishop or a pope, may make a hypocrite, but never a spiritual man. We are all alike consecrated priests at our baptism, as St. Peter says, *You are priests and kings* ('a royal priesthood,' 1 Pet. ii. 9): and if that consecration by God were not upon us, the unction of the Pope could never consti-

tute a priest. If ten brothers, sons of a king, and having equal rights to the inheritance, should choose one from among them to administer the kingdom for them, they would all be kings, but one alone the minister of their common power. Thus it is in the church. If certain pious laymen were placed in a desert, and, having no ordained priest among them, were to select one, married or not, to perform that office, the man so chosen would be as truly a priest, as if all the bishops in the world had consecrated him. Thus were Augustine, Ambrose, and Cyprian chosen. . . .”

In his attack upon the second usurpation, Luther assigned to every Christian the right to read the Scriptures, and also the power to discriminate what might be true or false in the doctrines of Rome. And in respect to the third he maintained that the right in question rested with the princes rather than the popes; that there was no authority in the church, except for its improvement; and therefore none in the Pope to prevent the meeting of a free council for the removal of the abuses of the church.

Having established these bold principles in the place of the three bulwarks of Rome, he then mentioned the points in which a reform was essentially necessary. First were the secular power and dignity of the Pope; for it was indeed fearful to behold the chief of Christendom, the self-styled successor of St. Peter and Vicar of Christ, surpassing kings and emperors in the show and magnificence of this world. Next were the cardinals and the court of Rome—men whose stations were altogether useless, and of whom a very small fraction would suffice for the solution of doctrinal difficulties. “If you know not the use of these cardinals, I will tell you. Italy and Germany have numerous convents, foundations, cures richly endowed. How to draw all these riches to Rome? Cardinals are created. These honours and prelacies are

given to them. Thus is the whole surface of Italy reduced to a condition both of temporal and spiritual desolation to this single end—that all the wealth of all the churches may be drained to Rome. It may presently be the same with Germany. . . .” Then in succession and in the boldest expressions he exposed some of the least defensible among the papal usurpations, and denounced the unholy frauds and rapacity of the See—annates, palliums, commendams, the mendicity of the monks, the profligate celibacy of the clergy, the multitude of festivals dedicated to idleness and vice, the unscriptural unchristian education which was dispensed in the schools and universities.

In conclusion he appealed to the national pride of his compatriots and to the ambition of the Emperor :—

“ The Pope, finding the ancient masters of the Roman empire not altogether tractable, imagined a device to take their title and empire from them, and to transfer it to us Germans. And the result is, that we are become servants of the Pope. For he has taken possession of Rome, and obliged the Emperor by oath never to reside there ; whence it comes that the Emperor is Emperor of Rome, without possession of Rome. We have the name ; the Pope the country and cities. We have the title and the arms ; the Pope the treasure, the power and privileges. . . . Now may God, who has given us this empire, be our aid ! Let us act in conformity with our name, our title, our arms. Let us preserve our privileges. Let the Romans at length learn what rights God has given us by their hands. They boast that they have given us the empire. Well, let us take that which belongs to us ; let the Pope cede to us Rome and all that he retains of the empire ; let him put a stop to his exactions ; let him restore to us our liberty, our power, our property, our honour, our souls and our bodies ! Let the empire become what an empire

ought to be, and let the imperial sword no longer bow in constraint before the hypocritical pretensions of a Pope !” These and other similar exhortations were eagerly received by the German people, and spread with unprecedented rapidity. It was the cause of the nation against the crafty usurpers of Italy ; the cause of Christ against the corruptors of his gospel ; the cause of the multitude against a spiritual oligarchy of pharasaical oppressors and plunderers—and such indeed was now become the cause of Luther.

This publication was immediately followed by one of even greater force and more general celebrity—the tract* on the Babylonish captivity. If Luther, in the late address to his fellow-countrymen, touched those topics most closely affecting their interests or their pride as laymen and Germans, in the present, a Latin composition, he assailed in the same spirit the doctrinal corruptions of the church. The confessions with which he opened this “Prelude” are remarkably striking and important : “Whether I will or not, I am compelled to grow in knowledge day by day, so many and so great are the masters who are urging and exercising me with all their might. Two years ago I wrote about indulgences, but in such a manner that I now heartily repent of having published the book. For then I was embarrassed by a sort of superstitious reverence for the Roman tyranny. Wherefore I dared not altogether to reject even indulgences, seeing what multitudes of people agreed in approving them. Nor was this strange, as I then stood alone in that labour. But afterwards, through the kindness of Sylvester and the Dominicans who strenuously protected the indulgences, I discovered that they were nothing more

* A “Prelude” he calls it—“De Captivitate Babylonica Ecclesie Prælium D. M. L.”

than mere impostures of the Roman flatterers, destructive alike to the faith of God and the property of men. And I heartily wish that I could induce the sellers and the readers of those my books to burn every one of them and to substitute the following proposition in the place of all their contents: ‘Indulgences are the iniquities of the Roman flatterers.’

“Afterwards Eck and Emser with their brother-conspirators began to instruct me respecting the primacy of the Pope; and I should be ungrateful to those learned men if I did not acknowledge my obligations to them. For then, while I denied the divine right of the papacy, I admitted the human. But since I have heard and read the extremely minute subtleties with which those affected puppies build up their idol, now I know for a certainty that the papacy is the kingdom of Babylon and the power of Nimrod, the strong hunter. Wherefore I entreat my readers to burn in like manner all that I have written on that subject, and to receive the following in its place: The papacy is the strong hunting of the Roman bishop.”

The substance of this work is an inquiry into the sacraments of the Roman church. Luther reduced their number, as far as they rested on any scriptural foundation, to three—Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and Penance. And even respecting the last of these he admitted, at the conclusion of his argument, that it did not satisfy the definition of a sacrament, as it wanted the outward and visible sign. “If we are to speak rigidly there are no more than two sacraments in the church of God, Baptism and the Eucharist, since in these alone the sign divinely appointed and the promise of a remission of sins are found united.” He entered into a long discussion respecting the character of the Eucharist, and invaded with perfect fearlessness its most cherished abuses. The refusal of the cup to the laity he denounced as a

direct violation both of the act and word of Christ : “ Neither of these have we with us—only that shallow device of men, ‘ the church has ordained it : ’ yet was it not the church, but the tyrants of the church, without the consent of the church, which is God’s people, who made this ordinance. . . . Rise up then in a body, all you papal adulators, be quick, and clear yourselves from impiety, tyranny, treason against the gospel, outrage against your brethren—you who call men heretics, because they will not adopt the mere dream of your fancy, against the force of scriptural evidence. If the terms heresy and schism are indeed to be applied anywhere, it is not to the Bohemians, not to the Greeks, for they have scripture on their side ; but it is you, Romans, who are the heretics and the impious schismatics—you, who stand presumptuously upon your own fiction, in defiance of the manifest word of God. *Eluite hæc, viri !* ”

Respecting the sensible qualities of the consecrated elements, he declared his deliberate dissent from the Thomistic doctrine of the church, which left them as mere accidents. It was his opinion that the bread and wine were truly there, and in them the true flesh and blood of Christ.* Here were the rudiments of the doctrine subsequently denominated consubstantiation ; and in endeavouring to establish it in the succeeding paragraphs, in opposition to the tenets of the church, he introduced that illustration which has obtained a notoriety almost as extensive as the opinion itself : “ Why may not Christ contain his body within the substance of bread as well as in accidents ? Fire and iron, for instance, are two substances ; yet they are so mixed in red-hot iron,

* “ *Tandem stabilivi conscientiam meam sententia priore—esse videlicet verum panem verumque vinum, in quibus Christi vera caro verusque sanguis non aliter nec minus sit, quam illi in suis accidentibus ponunt.* ” *Oper. Luth. t. ii. fol. 263, Edit. Jenens.*

that every part is both iron and fire. How much more then may the glorious body of Christ be bread, after the same fashion, in every part of the substance!"*

Whatever may be the merit of this illustration, some arguments follow it which are as puerile as any of those that they oppose; and which were derived indeed from the same scholastic source—that which no one could denounce more powerfully, or employ more ingeniously, than Luther, according as he was upholding a sound principle, or battling for a suspicious tenet.

“The third captivity of this sacrament and by far its most impious abuse” (continued Luther) “is the persuasion that the mass is a good work and a sacrifice. Which abuse has produced an infinite deluge of other abuses, until the faith of the sacrament has been entirely extinguished, and mere marketings, jobbings, and all sorts of pecuniary contracts substituted in its place. Hence it is, that participations, fraternities, suffrages, merits, anniversaries, memories, and all such matters, are sold, bought, bargained, compounded in the church, so that the whole maintenance of priests and monks depends upon them.” After arguing at great length against this doctrine, and reasoning on the other sacraments of his church with general precision and justness, he concluded with the following determined defiance to the court of Rome: “I hear it rumoured that the bulls are at length prepared against me, those papal anathemas which are to leave me the choice of retractation, or heresy. If this be true, I wish this book to be considered as a part of my future retractation, that the men may have some little ground for their complaints of aggression upon their tyranny. I

* “*Ecce ignis et ferrum, duæ substantiæ, sic miscentur in ferro ignito, ut quælibet pars sit ferrum et ignis. Cur non multo magis corpus gloriosum Christi sic in omni parte substantiæ panis esse possit!*” *Oper. Luth. t. ii. fol. 263, Edit. Jenens.*

shall presently publish the remainder in such a form, if Christ prosper me, as has never yet fallen under the eyes or ears of the Roman See; and thus they shall have abundant testimony of my obedience."

On these brief extracts I shall only remark how entirely Luther had penetrated the close connexion subsisting between the doctrinal and the practical abuses of the church. It was impossible to assail the one with any effect, without bringing the other into question. In their consequences they were inseparable; and any religious mind, boldly reflecting upon the entire system and trying it by the test of Scripture, was sure to extend to the tenets the condemnation which might first perhaps be attracted by the practices. With Luther this was no result of any predetermined plan—it was not for the sake of undermining the practices that he attacked the tenets—it was only that the same free spirit of inquiry, which led him to compare both with his Bible, led him likewise to believe the groundlessness of both. The spiritual errors, which had been supported and canonised by the authority of the Pope, reacted back again for the support of the See; and it was through the superstitions founded on them that it controlled not only the consciences but the purses of the faithful—so that no doctrinal abuse could be broken away without closing at the same time some source of pontifical, or at least of sacerdotal, revenue.

Meanwhile, the various exertions of Luther had now produced a very deep impression upon all classes of the German people. Letters of congratulation and encouragement flowed in upon him from every quarter; and a more substantial proof of affection was tendered to him during the summer of 1520 in an offer of refuge and protection from certain powerful nobles. I shall avail myself of this occasion to give some short account of three or four illustrious laymen who were at this time

distinguished, if not for the purity of their evangelical zeal, at least for a manly and indignant resistance to "the Roman tyranny."

The most remarkable of these men was Ulrich of Hütten. The member of an illustrious house of Franconia, he was born at Stocksberg, in that province, about five years earlier than Luther. He was destined while quite a boy to the monastic life. But at the age of sixteen he escaped from the convent of Fulda, broke the fetters that were preparing for him, and was admitted to the university of Franfort.* Nature had endowed him with considerable literary talents, and he improved them. Poetry and eloquence he cultivated with most success. He acquired more than the usual store of classical erudition, and to this he added some knowledge of jurisprudence. His attention was likewise attracted by the ecclesiastical condition of Christendom, and he made sufficient progress in divinity to enable his acute mind to form a true estimate of the existing system. Accordingly he declared his hostility to the scholastic method, as the great innovation of the three preceding centuries, and his desire to replace it by the theology of older days. He denounced the vanity of the sciences then in vogue. He condemned the ignorance of the priests and monks, together with their other vices; and even the morals of the age did not escape, noble and courtier though he was, the severity of his censure.

His profession was that of arms, and it carried him, in the year 1513, into various parts of Italy. A closer examination of the papacy confirmed his principles and inspired his talents. Immediately before he left the country he published two satirical compositions, the one against the predominant crimes of Rome, the other more

* Seckendorf, lib. i. sect. xxxv. § 82.

especially against the reigning pontiff, Julius. In the one, "Pasquillus Exul," he declared that amidst the universal venality of the Holy City there were only two sins really considered as mortal, Poverty and Truth. And in the other, "Julius Exclusus," he represented that Pope, on being rejected by St. Peter from the gates of Paradise, as menacing with military violence the guardian apostle and the peaceful abodes committed to his charge. Another tract, called the Roman Trinity,* followed soon afterwards in a tone of still more envenomed violence—insomuch that the Archbishop of Mayence, to whose service the author was then attached, obliged him to withdraw from his court.

There is no question that Hütten contributed largely to a more important production of the same description, which appeared in 1516, the same year with the edition of the New Testament by Erasmus. The "Epistles of Obscure Men" were exhibited as the composition of certain monks, enemies of Reuchlin, addressed to Eratius, a professor at Cologne. In these confidential communications the supposed writers revealed with ingenuous simplicity, and in the most barbarous language, their ignorance, their dulness, their profligacy; their superstition tinged with infidelity; their mingled pride, hypocrisy and fanaticism. And so faithfully were these qualities painted, so little were they caricatured in this representation, that the writings were at first embraced by certain Dominicans both in England and Holland as the genuine effusion of friends and ornaments of the monastic profession. This delusion, however, was not general or

* It contained such taunts as these: "There are *three* things which we generally carry away from Rome—a bad conscience, a disordered stomach, and an empty purse. There are three things in which Rome does not believe—the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and hell, &c. . . ."

lasting. The work was admirably suited to the age to which it was addressed. It was devoured with delight by multitudes of the more enlightened, and contributed in its way to prepare the world for the operations of Luther. Yet by the reformer himself it was mentioned with reprobation, as a tissue of insulting buffoonery. From the high religious ground which he had taken he looked down with contempt even upon the well-intended exertions of humbler minds, and almost rejected the co-operation, however useful, which proceeded from principles less exalted than his own.

After his exile from the court of Mayence and an ineffectual attempt to recommend himself to the favour of Charles V., Hütten sought the protection of Francis of Sickingen, another noble adventurer whom we shall presently notice. From the castle of Ebernburg, which was the refuge of the disaffected, he issued numerous exhortations and remonstrances, in that tone of vigorous eloquence which a strong sense of wrong so commonly inspires, both to the rulers and to the masses of the German people.* His object was the emancipation of his

* We may instance his letter to Charles of the 1st of April, 1521, when Luther was about to encounter his enemies at Worms: "You are on the point of destroying us and yourself along with us. What is it that they want in the affair of Luther but to destroy our liberty and put down your power? There is not a just man in the whole extent of your empire who does not take the most lively interest in this affair. It is the priests alone who are roused against Luther, because he opposes their excessive power, their shameful luxury, their depraved lives; and has pleaded for the doctrine of Christ, for the liberty of his country, and the sanctity of morality, &c. . . ." On the 17th of the same month he addressed to Luther himself, then at Worms, some ardent spiritual consolation and encouragement. "Our well-beloved Luther, my respectable father—be bold and fear nothing. The council of the wicked lays siege to you, and they have opened their mouths against you like roaring lions. But the Lord will rise up against the impious and disperse them. . . ."

country from the yoke of Rome, and thus far his vows were the vows of Luther; but the means which he proposed were different; the sword was the instrument most in favour with his impatient and military spirit.

At the death of Sickingen his friends were dispersed, and Hütten retired to Basle. There the purely papal party could not, probably, have disturbed him, had it not been aided by the influence of Erasmus. He withdrew, first to Mulhausen, and thence to Zurich. Zwingle received him without suspicion, and afforded him such protection as he was able; and finally, when some intrigue excluded him from the city, placed him in security in a little island named Ufian, in the adjacent lake. He was scarcely relegated to this obscurity (in 1523) when he died—not indeed by the hand of the persecutor, but not the less a martyr to his zeal for the spiritual independence of the German nation and his inextinguishable hatred for the name of Rome. And it would be ungrateful were we to take leave of this generous, disinterested,* and in many respects enlightened champion of the cause, without offering him that tribute of respect and consideration which history owes to all, who have in any way contributed to the emancipation and advancement of their species.

Hartmuth of Cronberg was another of the military patrons of the Reformation who employed the pen, too, with some ability in the same cause. In the very outset of the dispute he addressed a bold remonstrance to

* It is related of him that at his father's death, being already proscribed, he made over to his younger brothers all the property of the family, and even refused to receive any portion of it from them, lest their connexion with him should bring them into difficulties with the ruling authorities. His works, which have been lately published at Berlin, extend to five 8vo. volumes.

Leo X., in which he assured the Pope that his house was built on very loose foundations, and that the winds and rains must presently prevail against it; while he entreated him to resign all his temporal power to the Emperor, and to employ his spiritual influence against the Turk, the common foe of Christendom. There are other of his productions* composed in a more evangelical spirit; one especially, which was written to the four mendicant orders on June 25, 1522, from which the following are extracts:—

“Beloved brethren! I, Hartmuth of Cronberg, tender you my friendly service with a hearty wish for God’s grace; and I exhort you to understand that the motive which impels me to this act is evangelical truth and brotherly love. Wherefore I cannot refrain from offering you a fraternal warning concerning the clear, pure, evangelical doctrine, which in our time, through God’s profound mercy, shines with such celestial light upon us poor unworthy men. Dear brethren, the doctrine which Luther preaches is not his doctrine, but has flowed out of the well of Jesus Christ. The man who follows this heavenly learning follows not Luther but Christ. We believe Luther no farther than we find him grounded in the holy gospel. The holy fathers inform us that we receive no doctrine, except as it stands on Scripture. Yet the monks, without any Scriptural foundation, declare that Luther’s doctrine is heretical and adverse to God. They say, too, that it tends to excite tumults

* For instance—“Ein schrift und Christlich vermeynung;” addressed to the senate of Strasburg in 1523. A letter to Pope Adrian to show “a safe and wholesome method for the uprooting of all heresies and the preserving of all Christendom from the Turkish tyranny,” in which the questions were placed on Christian grounds and discussed in a very pious spirit. Published at Wittemberg also in 1523.—*Autographa Reformatorum*. Bodleian. Oxf.

among the common people. Yet since not one of all the scholars has exhibited any sound reason in opposition to it, and since all the high schoolmen who have written against it have failed to make good a single Christian objection, therefore ought the truth and power of the indestructible word of God to be still more firmly established, and rooted in us the more and the longer.” A few months afterwards he addressed an admonition to the Imperial Council at Nuremberg, in which, among other inspiring declarations, he affirmed, “that he would present himself to be quartered, if by such a fate he could prevail to diffuse throughout Germany the evangelical doctrine.” Such assertions, however rudely expressed, proceeding from laymen and soldiers were extremely useful to the cause, as they influenced certain classes of the people who might not have been moved or even reached by them, had they issued only from universities, or pulpits. There were some, besides, penetrated with so deep a distrust of the whole ecclesiastical body, as to be disposed to receive with great suspicion even the good presented to them from that quarter.

The most turbulent as well as the most powerful of these champions of the Reformation was Francis of Sickingen. His father, Suivik, a gentleman of no high rank, had been executed by Maximilian for perpetual acts of insubordination. The son was still more intriguing, with greater talents, as restless and as brave. He was remarkable too for his eloquence and his respect for learning and the learned; and he shared with the most intelligent of his compatriots that strong inclination for the cause of Reuchlin, which proved the maturity of the German feeling and its preparation for a bolder struggle on a more extensive field. Yet was he no more than a brilliant adventurer, an object of mingled admiration and terror, and the cause of incessant trou-

bles. Active and unwearied in the pursuit of his purposes, he appeared now at one end of Germany, now at the other, with small armies but many supporters, frequently negotiating, sometimes making desultory incursions,* but neither the one nor the other for any ostensible interest of his own. It was some personal friend whom he was rescuing from danger, some feeble sovereign whom he was preserving from a more powerful oppressor, some wrong already perpetrated that he was hastening to redress. Thus was he feared by the greater princes, even by the Emperor himself, while among the inferior potentates and the body of the nobility he possessed unlimited influence.

His talents, his habits, his independent character, made him the enemy of the Roman despotism and the protector of all who had declared against it. In his castle of Ebernburg he afforded refuge to several reformers. Œcolampadius, Bucer, Schwebel, Aquila, were assembled there, together with Hütten. This last instructed his host in the principles of evangelical truth, while Œcolampadius in vain endeavoured, by the daily exercise of his professional eloquence, to bring the hearts of his warlike associates to some perception of the peaceful graces of their religion. Sickingen persisted in considering the sword as the most efficient weapon for the propagation of the gospel; and seemingly with that view, though under some other pretext, he made war upon the Archbishop of Treves. That prelate had not, however, been distinguished as an enemy to the Reformation—that Luther

* Gulielmus Marcellus ad Sec. XVI. (ap. Seckend. I. sect. 57) relates of him that he was “*elegantis et sociabilis conversationis et hoc quo scribo tempore (1521) quadraginta fere annorum; minimè miles, sed militiæ amantissimus, licet eam nunquam exercuisset; generosus etiam et honestus, lepidus idem et pacatus, ut nemo neque nobilis in Germania, neque princeps, neque vir militaris esset, qui ipsi non gratificaretur.*”

had consented to commit the cause to his judgment proved at least his reputed impartiality; and the two princes who immediately assisted him in repelling the invader (the Elector Palatine and the Landgrave of Hesse) were those who, next to Frederick, were best disposed towards the new principles. The movement of Sickingen, therefore, as an enterprise for the advancement of the gospel, is not quite intelligible. It was undertaken in defiance of the earnest exhortations of Luther; and its fatal termination confirmed that reformer in his early and long-cherished principle, that it was not the will of God to establish His word through acts of violence.*

Sickingen was slain, in the spring of 1523, in defence of one of his castles, named Landstein; and by his death the party which advocated an armed resistance to the authority of Rome was altogether broken in pieces.

Sylvester of Schaumberg, a Franconian nobleman of very high rank, while sending his son to study at Wittemberg, took that occasion to offer his protection to Luther. He had heard, he said, from men of learning, that the doctrine of the latter rested on divine authority; that he was ready to submit it either to a council or to the judgment of pious and learned individuals; yet that his life was in danger, and that he was meditating an escape to the Bohemians, as to a people not subject to the ecclesiastical authority. He then entreated him not to risk the popularity of his cause by that connexion; and offered his own patronage, and that (as he believed) of an hun-

* In June, 1521, Luther wrote to Spalatin as follows:—"Quod Huttenus petat vides. Nollem vi et cæde pro evangelio certari; ita scripsi ad hominem. Verbo victus est mundus; Verbo servata est ecclesia; etiam Verbo reparabitur; sed et Antichristus, ut sine manu cæpit, ita sine manu conteretur per Verbum."

dred nobles besides, until the affair should be finally decided by a competent tribunal.

Luther felt the value of this offer, as it proved that he had friends ready to act, as well as to write and speak, in his behalf. He immediately caused the circumstance to be communicated, not at Dresden only, but at Rome. On the 10th of July he transmitted Schaumburg's letter to Spalatin, accompanied by expressions of unbounded confidence in his cause, and deliberate contempt both for the "wrath and favour of Rome." "Let them know that if they drive me from Wittenberg by their anathemas they will only make bad worse, since there are men, no longer in Bohemia, but in the very heart of Germany, who are both able and willing to protect me against all their thunders. Under such guardians I should assuredly assail the Papists with more fury than I do now, while engaged by the commands of my sovereign in discharging the functions of public education. If I have thus far spared them, let them not ascribe it to my modesty or to their own power or merits, but to the authority of my prince and to the common cause of the students of Wittenberg. So far as I am concerned, the die is cast; I despise both the wrath and favour of Rome; I will be reconciled and communicate with them no more. Let them condemn and burn my books; I in my turn will condemn and publicly set fire to the whole pontifical code, that receptacle of every heresy. I will lay aside that humility which I have so long and so vainly displayed towards them, and which has only served to inflame their hatred for the gospel. . . . Convulsed by the worst conscience, with their latest breath they simulate ferocity. They would cloak their ignorance by their violence. . . . But the Lord, who knows the sinfulness

of my heart, will doubtless accomplish his enterprise by other hands, if he should deem it too holy a work for mine."

But notwithstanding these lofty expressions, addressed to the chaplain and confidant of his prince, he wrote very soon afterwards to the Cardinal of Santa Croce in a different tone. To him, in soliciting him to act as mediator in this affair, he held more moderate language. He professed his readiness to make every submission, if only he were not commanded to retract, or to abandon the liberty with which he taught the word of God, or to lie under the undeserved stigma of heresy. Yet in the same breath he added that he feared neither censure nor violence, that he had a safe refuge in the hearts of the German people, and that his foes should take heed, lest in their eagerness to destroy one adversary they should raise up many. This letter has been condemned as inconsistent with the former, but, as it seems to me, without justice. The difference between them is in manner only, not in substance. The sort of submission offered by Luther to the cardinal could not possibly have been accepted, since in fact it contained not even the shadow of a concession. And if those more decorous expressions and the show of humility recommended his cause to the more cautious among his German friends, for such was probably the real object of the composition, it was an advantage obtained by no compromise either of his character or of his cause.

The bull, which had been composed at Rome in June, did not reach Germany till three months afterwards. It allowed the offender the space of sixty days to make his retractation and of sixty more to bring or send it to Rome. But if this were not complied with, it consigned him at the expiration of that term to ex-

communication; and involved all his protectors in the same censure, with deprivation of all charges and dignities.

The Pope sent with it a letter to the Elector, dated July 8, in which he eulogised his prudence and his piety; thanked him that he had not hitherto afforded either aid or protection "to the most wicked and detestable of all heretics, a man whose only mission was from the devil;" and prayed him, in case the injunction of the bull should not be obeyed within the prescribed time, to secure the person of the offender. Invested with the inauspicious dignity of nuncio, Eck received these documents, and set out in great exultation on his mission to Germany.

The office with which he was charged was in itself sufficiently unpopular; in his person it became positively hateful. Even at Leipzig, where he had just contended with acclamation and the show of success, and where the conservative principles both of the duke and the university had been so lately manifested, he was received with indignation and disdain. There indeed, through the express command of the bishop of Mersburg, he was permitted to publish the bull, but no sooner did it appear than it was torn in pieces by the students and populace and trodden under foot.

From Leipzig, after sustaining much insult, he escaped by night to Erfurth and presented it to the university. That body, under the pretext of some informality, rejected it; and, as he still persisted in his attempt, both the bull and its bearer received the same treatment as at Leipzig. The bishop of Bamberg refused to give it circulation in his diocese; and though the greater part of the clergy was unquestionably favourable to it, the bishop of Freisengen and others deferred the publication for some months.

All this happened during the autumn of 1520. In December was undertaken the still more desperate enterprise of proclaiming it at Wittenberg. The diocesan, the Bishop of Brandenburg, came in person for the purpose. With him were the Elector of Brandenburg and the Duke of Mecklenburg, that the countenance of the great might not be wanting to the furtherance of the attempt. Yet when they arrived and ascertained the state of public opinion, they perceived such powerful proofs of the estimation in which Luther was held and of the resolution of his supporters, that they desisted at once from their hopeless purpose.

Such was the result of the triumph of Eck and of his policy. That zealous churchman had now been labouring for almost two years—first, to compromise Luther inextricably with the Pope, and then to procure his condemnation. He succeeded in both. So complete was his success, so flattering to his personal vanity, so conclusive of his great influence with the Vatican, that he was himself appointed to superintend the execution of his measure. He departed as a humble professor; he returned in the proud character of nuncio. And at the moment when he thought that nothing remained but to collect the spoils of his victory he made the tardy discovery that, in fact, he had been fighting the battle of his adversary and bringing the very authority, for which he professed such ardent devotion, into peril and dishonour. He imagined that the act of excommunication would be decisive. And in one sense it was so—it decided the character of the insurrection, hitherto fluctuating between remonstrance and rebellion. It decided the course of Luther and animated the courage of his supporters. But the Papist of Ingolstadt was dazzled by the imposing magnificence of the established power; and in his blind adherence to a decrepit institution and

to principles which were falling day by day into deeper and deeper disrepute, he overlooked the advancing spirit of the age and despised the pronounced opinion of the German people.

It was not however without warning, and that from a very authoritative quarter, that the Pope had determined on this measure. In the spring of the same year, while the bull was actually in preparation, Frederick himself had addressed some expressions to Tenteleben, his agent at Rome, which were communicated to the Vatican, and which conveyed perhaps the gravest lesson it could then receive. "The state of Germany," said the Elector, "is not now such as it was formerly. Arts and literature are flourishing, and even many of the people are filled with a thirst for scriptural knowledge. So that, if the court of Rome shall proceed only by the force of ecclesiastical authority, and if the conditions proposed by Luther shall be rejected with a haughty refusal to examine his doctrine, and if no solid evidence and arguments shall be brought against it from Scripture, very great commotions will arise out of this matter, from which the Pope will assuredly derive no sort of advantage. . ."

A very striking confirmation of the truth of this warning was given, not only by the general contempt with which the bull was received, but even by the particular tone assumed by Ulrich of Hütten in treating it. He addressed, besides a letter to the Pope, some exhortations on this subject to the German people, in the spirit not only of a Christian but of a German: "This is not Luther's affair. It touches you all in common. The sword is not drawn against one especially, but against all publicly. If you will hear me, remember now that you are Germans; this recollection alone will rouse you to vengeance. . . ." It was the soldier exhorting his

compatriots not to submit to mere naked tyranny, not to compromise the independence of the whole community by allowing the destruction of one ; but to take advantage of this spiritual rebellion for more extensive purposes, and to seek, in the noble struggles of a single evangelical reformer, the occasion for shaking off from every member of the whole nation the detested chains of Rome.

Luther saw the ground on which he stood. Though he was ever ready to offer pacific professions to the Pope ; though he was desirous, if possible, to avert the hostility of the Emperor ; though above all he was most anxious to oblige the Elector of Saxony ; and though he dreaded any appeal to violence as fatal to his cause ; yet he clearly perceived that his real strength and surest hopes were placed in the attachment of the people, and that it would be blindness to trust very much to any other consideration. In this conviction and in the confidence with which he looked to that quarter, he conducted his defence against the bull with a courage well suited to give assurance to his popular supporters. And having ascertained that Charles was surrounded by his enemies and already prejudiced against him, and having witnessed the failure of the last feeble conciliatory struggle of Miltitz, he turned himself in downright earnest to wage war with the bull, to insult its fabricators, to outrage the system whence it proceeded ; and by these decided measures to rally round him all those who were sincere in their desire for a thorough reformation of the church of Rome.

First he published a violent attack upon Eck. In this, after repelling various other charges which had been alleged against him, he proceeded to handle the more dangerous subject of the Bohemian heresy. But this he now treated boldly, so as not only to defend many of the

positions of Huss, but even to express regret that, through ignorance of his works, he had disclaimed him at the disputation of Leipzig. To the same effect we observe a remarkable "Confession" of Luther, inserted by way of apostrophe in his commentary on the 16th Psalm, published about the same time.

"Wherefore," he says, "that I may make atonement to my conscience, and escape at the hour of death and at the last judgment the charge of an impious silence on this subject, I do hereby affirm and confess, before all who may read and hear these writings, before heaven and earth, in respect to these evangelical and most Christian articles, of which I undertook the defence at Leipzig, I declare and protest, I say, that it was impiety to condemn them, and that the Council of Constance was, so far as this goes, the council of Satan. I condemn, excommunicate, renounce and detest all who were present at that council, all who agreed or who now agree in that verdict, whether popes, bishops, kings, or others, lest I too should share in the pollution of innocent blood.

"Farther, I protest that, if John Huss and Jerome of Prague were burnt, as it appears, for no other offence than those articles, injustice was done to them, and the Pope and his party were most cruel and impious murderers, enemies of Christ and of his church. Be witnesses of this my faith and confession whosoever shall read this. In truth, at Leipzig I had not yet learnt the meaning of those articles, expressed indeed in the most Christian language; therefore I could not then confute the sense which the Pope's sycophant affixed to them. But now, on examination of John Huss's book, I discover from the context that their sense as well as their language is most Christian. What is the Pope? What is the world? What is the prince of the world, that out of compliment to him I should deny that gospel-truth for which Christ

died? Be the consequence what it may—success to those who may succeed, perdition to those who may perish,—I will ever, by God's help, adhere to this opinion.”*

From his assault upon the nuncio Luther advanced to higher ground. On the 17th of November he published an Appeal from his sentence to a General Council. The appeal itself, though published with every formality, in the presence of a notary and witnesses in the Augustinian monastery at Wittemberg, was nothing more than a repetition of his former Act (of November 28, 1518). But the expressions by which he justified it were entirely in a different spirit. It was no longer an appeal from a Pope ill informed, from a Daniel in Babylon, to an assembly which might inform and protect him; but from a bloodthirsty tyrant, an iniquitous judge, an obdurate heretic and apostate, a proud antichristian blasphemer of the church of Christ, to the legitimate authority representing that church. At the same time he urged the Emperor and all the imperial potentates to adhere to this appeal and throw off at once the papal despotism; or, if this were too bold a measure, at least to defer the execution of the bull until the cause should be decided, by scriptural reasoning and evidence, before an impartial tribunal.

A fortnight afterwards he composed two tracts—the one a furious attack upon the bull, the other a defence of his own tenets condemned in it. Both bear the same date, of Dec. 1, 1520, and the former was probably published on that day. But the latter contains an allusion to a subsequent occurrence, which proves that it was not

* Opera Lutheri (Edit. Jen.) tom. ii. fol. 166. “Quid est Papa? quid mundus? quid Princeps mundi? ut propter eum veritatem Evangelii, pro qua Christus mortuus est, negem? Valeat qui valet, pereat qui perit, ego sic sentiam Deo propitio semper.”

completed as it now exists till a somewhat later period.*

The former of these was directed “Against the execrable Bull of Antichrist;” and the character of its contents did not in any degree deceive the expectation excited by its title. Pretending to ascribe the composition rather to Eck than to the Pope or court of Rome, the author assailed it with unmeasured vituperation. And in the course of his eloquent and indignant railing he showed mercy neither on pontiff nor cardinals, neither on the practices nor the doctrines of the church. “I call then upon you, Leo X., and you, cardinals, and all your Roman coadjutors, and I tell you openly and freely that, if this bull is indeed your work and recognised by you, I too will use my power, received through God’s mercy at my baptism, and by which I am made a child of God and co-heir with Christ, standing upon a firm rock which fears neither the gates of hell nor heaven nor earth; and I admonish you all in the Lord that you return to your senses and put an end to your diabolical blasphemies and most audacious impieties, and that speedily. For if you fail in this, be warned that I and all who believe in Christ will hold your See, possessed as it is and oppressed by Satan, for the condemned see of Antichrist; so as not only to withdraw our obedience, our subjection, our connexion, but to detest and execrate it as the first and foremost among the enemies of Christ. . . . And if any one,” he says in conclusion, “shall despise this my brotherly admonition, let him know that I am innocent of the blood that he may shed, and shall stand excused at the last judgment. For I have omitted nothing that

* “Deinde Decretales Papæ non dico Apocryphas . . . sed impias et Christo adversarias, solo spiritu Satanæ efflatas, qua causa et eas exussi cum fiducia.” Assertio omnium Articulorum, &c. ad Artic. xxx.

is due to Christian charity. And if all other means shall fail me of resisting my oppressors, I will render up to them the last thing that shall remain to me, this life and blood. For it is better to be slain a thousand times over, than to retract a single syllable of those condemned articles. And as they excommunicate me in defence of their sacrilegious heresy, so do I in my turn excommunicate them for the holy truth of God. And let Christ our judge decide, whether of the two excommunications has the greater weight with Him. Amen."

The second of these two compositions was entitled "An Assertion of all the Articles of Martin Luther condemned in the last Bull of Leo X." And herein, with much learning and ingenuity and at considerable length, he defended the forty-one propositions without exception or distinction; and argued with the same warmth in favour of the most questionable as of the most certain, of the most hasty as of the most deliberate,* of the stigmatised opinions. For he had the defects as well as the virtues of a vehement character; and that which he might have asserted without consideration, or through the love of paradox, or through too indiscriminate an enmity to the whole system of the church, he was prepared to maintain with all his energy, and at no little expense of reason, if not of conscience also.

In the mean time, through the great exertions of the ecclesiastical authorities, the monks and secular clergy, and the influence which the established despotism still

* As a specimen of each of these classes let us take Articles xxxiii. and xxxiv.

XXXIII. "To burn heretics is to oppose the will of the Holy Spirit."

XXXIV. "To war against the Turks is to oppose the will of God, who visits our iniquities by means of them." The former is in our eyes as manifest a truism as the latter is a palpable absurdity. Yet both were alike condemned by the Pope and defended by Luther!

retained over the feelings of many of its adherents, the bull found in some few places a zealous, in many a tardy and reluctant, acceptance. The ceremony by which such acceptance was proved and signalised was the public burning of the books of the heretic; and this was performed, with more or less of popular opposition, at Mayence, Louvain, Cologne and other cities. Luther, learning this, and having now ascertained the strength and character of his own party, and also compromised himself with the Romanists by deliberate expressions and acts which could neither be retracted nor forgiven, and perceiving besides that his only hopes of safety were placed in the firmness and audacity of his resolution, determined at length upon that decisive proceeding which placed him in open rebellion against the See, and cut off every remaining chance of reconciliation.

On the 10th of December, at nine in the morning, he prepared a pile of wood in the public place at Wittemberg; and being attended, after due notice, by all the doctors of the university, by all the students and people, he caused it to be lighted. Then he took the bull of Leo, together with the Decrees, the Decretals, the Clementines and the Extravagants, the entire code of pontifical legislation, and, not disdaining to add to this assemblage the writings even of Eck and Emser, he cast them into the flames, at the same time exclaiming with his peculiarly clear and sonorous voice, and addressing the bull, which was offered last, as it were the crown of the sacrifice, "Because thou hast troubled and put to shame the Holy One of the Lord, so be thou troubled and consumed by the eternal fire of hell." *

* "Weil du den Heiligen des Herrn betrübt und geschändet hast, so betrübe und verzehre dich das ewige höllische feuer."—Seidelius, Hist. Luth., p. 43.

He immediately justified this act by a publication* in censure of the books which he had burnt. He extracted from them thirty articles which he pronounced to be impious and Antichristian. Among them were the following:—

That the successors of St. Peter are above that commandment which that apostle delivered to all men, to be subject to the temporal powers; that the Pope is superior to councils, and can abrogate their decrees; that all authority resides in his person; that, though he should drag innumerable souls to hell, no one would have the right to reprove him; that God has given him sovereign power over all the kingdoms of the earth and over the kingdom of heaven; that he is heir to the Roman empire; that he can depose kings and absolve from all oaths and vows; that he is the sole interpreter of Scripture; that he depends in no degree upon Scripture, but that Scripture, on the other hand, derives all its authority, force, and dignity from him. . . .

“ These articles are sufficient for the present; but if any one, through his lust after Papacy, shall endeavour to defend the same, then will I paint and describe them in much clearer and brighter colours, and add to them many others of the same description; for this is only the beginning of the tragedy—thus far I have only trifled and jested with the cause of the Pope. I took up the affair in the name of God; the moment was favourable, and I trusted that it would work itself out in the same name without any further exertion from me. Meanwhile I am determined to adhere to all the articles which have been condemned and executed in the last Roman bull by the nuncio of Antichrist, and to impute to the

* “ *Quare Pontificis Romani et discipulorum ejus libri a D. M. L. combusti sint.*”—Op. Luth., tom. ii. fol. 316.

Pope an equal number of articles as Antichristian and impious; for if they dare to burn my articles, which contain more of the gospel and of true theology, as I can without any boast assert, than all the pontifical books put together, with much greater right do I burn those impious books which contain nothing good; for if, as in the Decrees, there is anything in itself good, it is so distorted as to become noxious and only confirm the Pope in his Antichristian and unholy tyranny. I would willingly allow every one his own opinion; but what strikes me most is, that the Pope has on no single occasion ever overpowered any one of his opponents by Scripture or by reason, but always by violence, by excommunication, by means of kings, princes and other supporters, or else through wicked treachery and falsehood; and thus has he oppressed, exiled, burnt, or slain them in some other fashion; and I have the evidence of every history for the truth of this. . . .”

He concluded with two texts:—

“Judges xv. 11.—‘As they did unto me, so have I done unto them.’

“Revelation xviii. 6.—‘Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works.’”

The Acts * which contain the circumstances above described continue to relate that on the following day Luther resumed his lectures on the Psalms, and took occasion to warn his hearers to beware of those papal statutes. It was little to have burnt them: the matter was, to consume the whole papal See along with them. Then with much severity of countenance he affirmed:—“Unless you dissent with your whole heart from the

* “*Exustionis Antichristianarum Decretalium Acta.*”—Luth. Oper., tom. ii. fol. 230.

papal kingdom, you cannot obtain salvation for your souls. The kingdom of the Pope is so different from the kingdom of Christ and the life of a Christian, that it would be better to dwell in the desert in utter solitude than in that antichristian kingdom. Therefore I warn every one who values his salvation to take heed, lest in conforming to the Papacy he deny Christ. There is but this alternative: he who ministers to this church as it now is, without opposing its errors, risks his everlasting safety; he who opposes risks his safety here. I for my part prefer this temporal risk to the account which I must render to God hereafter, should I hold my peace now. Having for some time cordially dissented from the excesses of Rome, I now abominate that Babylonian pestilence; and this will I proclaim to my brethren so long as I live. If I have not power to resist the universal destruction of souls, many of our own countrymen may at least be preserved from eternal perdition. Let others take what course they will, it is high time for us at least to return to wisdom. . . .”

CHAPTER XII.

ERASMUS.

Death of Maximilian and effects of the Interregnum—the Crown offered to Frederick and refused—Charles V. finally elected—policy of the Pope—mission of Carraccioli and Aleander—sarcasms of Luther upon the latter—their interviews with Frederick at Cologne—Erasmus—account of his earlier proceedings—his theological principles—satisfactory neither to Loyola nor to Luther—his first differences with Luther—their many points of agreement as reformers—the edition of the New Testament—great use of that work—paraphrases on the New Testament—what view Erasmus took of Luther's beginnings—his excellent letter to Frederick in 1519—his letter to Luther in the same year—his letter to Noviomagus—papal attempts to gain him—his interview with Frederick at Cologne—his axioms—the publication of this transaction alienates Erasmus from the reformers, and Aleander from Erasmus.

THE Emperor Maximilian died in January, 1519, and this event was for the moment favourable to the Reformation; not because he had ever shown any violent enmity to the cause, but because the attention of the court of Rome was thus turned away from it to another and more pressing object; and chiefly because the imperial authority, throughout several provinces of the empire, devolved during the interregnum upon the Elector of Saxony—a prince more generally enlightened than Maximilian, better instructed as to the real objects of the reformers, far less capricious in his policy, and even less bigoted to the established abuses. And though Frederick had never professed any respect for the doctrines or regard for the person of Luther, and was perfectly sincere in his declared attachment to the church,

yet a general persuasion prevailed that he would never allow any injustice to be perpetrated on any of his subjects. This confidence in his character, by conveying a sort of pledge of personal security, probably determined some timid well-wishers to become active friends, while it certainly increased the courage of the reformer. Thus there can be no question that this interval of five months, for it was no longer, was a period of progress and prosperity; but it is a mistake, I think, to consider it as one very important in its results, or at all decisive of the fate of the Reformation. The negotiation of Miltitz had commenced during the reign of Maximilian, and Luther had been relieved from the impending fear of exile. The disputation of Leipzig had been arranged previously, the appeal to the council previously published, and the Roman Legate baffled in the face of the Christian world. Doubtless the principles already proclaimed spread more rapidly during the more peaceable season of the interregnum, but they would have made some advance under almost any circumstances; and the exhibition at Leipzig would not less have been afforded for their further development had Maximilian still occupied the imperial throne. Some advantages arose even from the temporary administration of a just prince, but not such as materially to influence the success of Luther's undertaking.

While the theologians of Germany were assembled at Leipzig for the discussion of their differences, and by acute argument or noisy declamation canvassing the pretensions of the Roman See and the foundations of its power, the princes of the nation were consulting at Francfort on the election of an emperor. The papal interests were concerned in both these deliberations, but the attention of Leo was directed almost entirely to the latter. And if, during the progress of those negotiations

which were to give to Christendom its most powerful monarch, he deigned to cast a thought on the lucubrations of the Saxon monk, it was probably in the belief, that the fate of his attempts would depend entirely on the will of the sovereign now to be chosen.

And so complicated were the interests of the Vatican—its political so strangely interwoven with its spiritual objects—that it was impossible for the most intelligent Pope to pursue the latter to the exclusion of the former. In the present instance it would even appear as if the affair of Luther had been altogether overlooked in the policy of the court of Rome. Jealous, on the one hand, of the existence of any overwhelming power in Italy, and, on the other, especially hostile to the French, Leo X. was equally opposed to the elevation of either of the two great competitors for the throne. Charles at Naples and Francis at Milan were objects of the same suspicion, and the security of the See forbade the aggrandisement of either.

National considerations led the electors, on somewhat similar grounds, to the same sort of distrust; and they decided to offer the crown to some German prince, whose reputation might justify the choice, and whose power was not sufficient to endanger the independence of the smaller States. The prince selected was Frederick of Saxony; and notwithstanding the recent indications of ecclesiastical independence—notwithstanding the determination he had shown to protect his subject from that oppression which at Rome was called justice, Leo thought it expedient to merge his spiritual in his temporal policy, and unquestionably employed his influence in favour of the Elector.

Had Frederick accepted the throne, and lived to mature his religious principles, the stream of the Reformation would have been broader, as well as much more

rapid; not only would it have advanced with less violence and contention, but probably would have reached the south-eastern provinces of the empire: the whole body might possibly have revolted by a single act from the Roman despotism. But, by an effort of magnanimity scarcely surpassed in history, he refused the offer. He believed that the invasions of the Turkish arms could only be repelled by the concentration of very great power in a single grasp; and to that one consideration he sacrificed others which more nearly concerned himself. He gave his suffrage to Charles, who thus (on June 28, 1519) was unanimously elected.

The friends of the Reformation were willing, in the first instance, to derive good hopes from this choice. The prince was young, and therefore, as they imagined, less likely to violate the first principles of justice, less enslaved to ancient prejudices, less steeped in craft and bigotry, than if greater years had given him deeper experience of the arts and principles of despotism. His reputation was that of gravity and foresight, promising security against any acts of violence or ferocity. Above all, he owed the crown, for which he so ardently thirsted, to the Elector of Saxony; so that from gratitude, if from no stronger motive, he would at least refrain from crushing the cause which Frederick was believed to foster. But these were the dreams of a sanguine self-delusion, which knew not that the fire of bigotry may burn as fiercely under the youthful vest as in the most practised and hardened bosom, and that public duty will ever furnish a specious and popular plea for private ingratitude.

The Pope presently applied himself to turn the circumstances, which he had been unable to control, to his own advantage. He despatched two nuncios to the imperial court to watch over the apostolical interests,

and to repress, by every resource of address and authority, the rising spirit of insubordination. Of these agents, Marino Carraccioli and Hieronymus Aleander, the latter was the more distinguished; and the part which he sustained during this period, and the talents with which he sustained it, have obtained for his name the highest commendations from the one party and the bitterest reproaches from the other. He was an Italian, a native of Treviso,* secretary to the Cardinal de Medicis, and librarian to the Pope. He was intimately acquainted with the Hebrew, Greek and Latin languages; he possessed the command of a fluent and ingenious eloquence, and was well versed, through long and successful experience, in the diplomacy of the Vatican. His private life is charged with the grossest profligacy; nor is it improbable that he carried with him into foreign courts and countries those habits which were a part of the morality of Rome. The circumstance that he was afterwards promoted to the purple only proves that he discharged his public duties to the satisfaction of his masters.

I shall here transcribe the terms in which Luther describes this enemy—not indeed as a faithful picture of Aleander, but as a fair and even favourable specimen of the sarcastic invective of the Reformer:—

“ In these days came Hieronymus Aleander, a man in his own opinion the first of all men, not only on account of the languages of which he is master—since Hebrew is his mother tongue, Greek has grown up with him from a boy, and with Latin he is familiar through

* “ *Natione Italus, patria Trevisatus. . . . Habet multa de fratre M. Lutters novitate et Ulrici Hütten temeritate, ob editos in publicum in Sedem Apost. et personam Pontificis famosos libellos . . . cum Roma et Illustrissima D. V. commentari, &c.*”—Valen. Teutleben, *Epist. ad Albertum Ep. et Elect. Moguntinum apud Gerdes. Mon. Antiq., tom. i. No. 15.*

daily use—but what he most prides himself on is the antiquity of his race; for he was born a Jew, which race is extremely proud of its very long and ancient descent from Abraham. It is not known whether he is baptised. It is certain that he is not a Pharisee, for he does not believe in the resurrection of the dead—seeing that he so lives as if he expected, when his body shall perish, to perish altogether, so indulgent is he to every evil propensity. He is irascible even to madness; furious on every little occasion. Of ungoverned arrogance, of insatiable avarice, of abominable and immoderate lust, the merest slave of glory; though he is too weak to obtain glory by industrious application, and too wicked even to attempt it by honest argument. But, to say the truth, his pretended apostacy to Christianity has turned out very fortunately for him; for he has thus got a handle for setting up and recommending his Moses, and for obscuring the glory of Christ, which is now beginning to revive, while superstition is flagging, together with the pestilent paltry traditions of men. Therefore is he just arrived, armed with pontifical authority, to destroy, as far as in him lies, everything that is good.”*

It was an important part of this commission to gain, or at least to influence, the Elector of Saxony. He was at Cologne, on his return from the coronation of Charles, when, in the very beginning of November, 1520, the nuncios obtained their audience. In the presence of the Bishops of Trieste and Trent, Carraccioli presented to him the apostolical brief; and in a long and flattering harangue reminded him of the glory of his ancestors and of his own, and exhorted him to justify the confi-

* Apud Seckendorf, lib. i. sect. 34, § 81. It should be mentioned that Aleander, in his speech before the Diet of Worms, noticed and denied these charges, asserting that his family was noble, and that he was descended from the Marquesses of Istria.

dence which was now placed in him by the Apostolical See. Aleander then interposed, and proceeded directly to the affair of Luther. He enlarged upon the danger impending over the Christian republic through doctrines more pernicious far than those of Huss or Jerome; he asserted that a speedy remedy was necessary, lest the Roman empire should be dismembered, as in former days, when the Greeks seceded from the papal communion. In conclusion, he made two demands in the name of his master: first, that Frederick should cause all the works of Luther to be burnt; next, that he should either himself inflict punishment* on the offender, or arrest and keep him in confinement, or send him prisoner to Rome.

Immediately afterwards, on the 4th of November, Frederick caused a reply to be communicated to the nuncios by some of his councillors, to the following effect:—That the Elector and his ancestors had deserved, by their ancient fidelity and present obedience, the respect of the Holy Catholic Church; that in regard to the affair of Luther the Elector had reason to complain, that Eck had exceeded his commission† and the tenor

* “De eo supplicium sumeret,” probably meaning death. *Brevis Commemoratio Rerum Coloniae Gestarum*.—*Oper. Luther.*, tom. ii. fol. 314.

† The letter (dated Leipzig, Oct. 3, 1520) with which Eck sent the bull to the university of Wittemberg contained this passage:—“*Quod autem ego, ex Commissione Apostolicâ, in publicatione Bullæ, præter Martinum addiderim quoque Carlstadium et Dolschium, ita accipere debetis, ut a me non sine urgenti causa factum sit. At si illi matrem agnoscent ecclesiam et parati sunt omnem hæresim abjurare, libenter ego illos sum recepturus et humaniter, atque auctoritate mihi specialiter super hoc à summo Pontifice tradita, eos absolvere et à pœnis incurrendis liberare. Si vero obdurerint (quod absit) digna adliceantur censura, &c.*” It will be observed that Eck here pleaded a special commission from the Pope for the addition of these two names.—*Luther. Oper.*, tom. ii. fol. 470.

of the bull, by involving the names of others (Carlstadt and Dölseh) in the condemnation of Luther, and thus bringing them into odium and danger; that the Elector was not aware how far Luther, during his absence from his kingdom, might have retorted such attempts; for it might be that a great multitude of people, learned and unlearned, sacred and secular, had attached themselves to the Lutheran cause and name; that for his own part he had no share in this affair; that he had obliged Luther to appear, two years previously, before the Cardinal of St. Sixtus at the Diet of Augsburg; that afterwards he was prepared to dismiss him from the university, and only retained him for the gratification of his Holiness, at the request of the papal nuncio (Miltitz); that Luther was subsequently subjected to the authority of the Archbishop of Treves, as pontifical commissioner, had a sufficient safe-conduct granted him; that his violence was said to be occasioned by the impious calumnies of his adversaries, while many learned, virtuous and pious persons thought and spoke with him; that the Elector had yet no proof that the works of Luther deserved to be burnt; that on those accounts the question ought to be examined and decided by just, learned, impartial, unsuspected judges; and that, if Luther should thus be convicted by fair and scriptural arguments, the Elector would of all men be the last to protect him.

The nuncios, after a short consultation, replied to the effect—that the sincerity of Luther's professions might well be doubted after the various methods attempted by the Pope to reclaim him; that the commission of the Archbishop of Treves necessarily ended when the Pope took the question, which was a question of faith, into his own hands; for that he was the sole judge of those matters, and any appeal from him was as unreasonable as

if a subject of the Elector of Saxony should appeal from his master's decision to the King of France, or to any other monarch; that they had no other course before them but to execute their orders by burning the books of Luther, for that the Pontiff had no wish to proceed against his person, or to steep his hands in his blood.*

It being then late, the conference terminated with no satisfactory result to the Roman emissaries; nor does it appear that they made any further attempt to move the constancy of Frederick. But being attached to the court of Charles, and attending him in his progress through the cities of the Netherlands and other parts of his dominions, they pleaded his name and authority to wage, wherever they were able, a destructive warfare against the books of the heretic; and the flames that they lighted with so much zeal, in an age no longer wholly blind or servile, awakened a curiosity in the ignorant and an emotion in the indifferent, which were finally favourable to the party persecuted.

Erasmus of Rotterdam was at that time at Cologne; and as that was the first occasion on which he became in any way involved in the affairs of the Reformation, it is proper in this place to make some mention of the previous labours and laurels, the talents, opinions, objects and principles of so remarkable a person—remarkable not so much for any benefit that he conferred on either party during this struggle, but for his singular reputation, his great learning both profane and theological, and the preparatory light which he had been peaceably diffusing for some years in most parts of Europe; so that the stirring appeals of Luther would not have produced such deep impressions, had not the minds of men been already roused, and their reflections turned

* “*Ut qui nolit manus suas (ut Aleandri verbis utamur) ejus sanguine pinguefacere.*”—*Brevis Commemoratio*, &c., *ibidem*.

towards the same or similar subjects, by the labours of those honoured precursors of whom Erasmus was the last and greatest.

The cause of Luther was in principle the same with that of Wiclif and of Huss: it was opposed by precisely the same arguments, the same power, the same passions and interests; and the success which alone distinguished it from the others is alone to be ascribed, under Divine Providence, to the intellectual superiority of his generation. This enabled the mass of the people to understand, and understanding to love the truth; and, rallying earnestly round it, to carry their wavering or adverse princes along with them; for it is not perhaps difficult to perceive that Frederick himself would scarcely have dared to extend to Luther with so much constancy the protection which preserved him, if the Reformer had not already secured the earnest prayers and vows of multitudes, both within the Saxon states and without them.

We must not therefore overlook the merits of the man who was at the head of that intellectual movement, and at the same time directed it into a religious channel. Erasmus was born about sixteen years before Luther. He was devoted at an early age to the monastic life; and having passed, with much reluctance, through his year of probation, made his profession as a regular canon at Utrecht in 1486. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1492. The succeeding years were spent in travel and in study, in intercourse with distinguished persons of all nations, and in perpetual attempts, which his epistles too constantly reveal, to secure pensions and preferment for himself. In 1503 he published the "*Enchiridion Militis Christiani*"—the Manual or Handbook of a Christian Soldier—a sensible and pious work, by which he designed to throw into disrepute "those

more than Judaical ceremonies and observances of corporal things then commonly constituting religion ;” and in their place to substitute that more genuine piety which consists in the practice of the Christian virtues.*

Sixteen years afterwards, in a letter to John Seleehta, a Bohemian, he expressed his principles more explicitly : “ Christian philosophy may be fairly reduced to this : that we ought to place our whole trust in God, who gratuitously gives us all things by his son Jesus Christ ; that we are redeemed by his death, that we are engrafted into his body by baptism ; to the end that being dead to worldly lusts we may live conformably to his precepts and example, not only doing no evil to any, but doing good to all ; that when adversity befalls us we should patiently submit to it, in hopes of the future recompense which doubtless awaits the pious at the coming of the Lord ; that we should make a daily progress in virtue, yet so as to arrogate nothing to ourselves, but to ascribe all that is good to God. These things are to be inculcated into men’s minds till they become a sort of nature to them. But if there shall be any who may desire to search into abstruser points concerning the divine nature or the substance of Jesus Christ, or the sacraments, with a view to exalt their understanding or to raise up their affections high above all humbler things, be it permitted to them ; provided always that all their Christian brethren be not compelled to profess everything that

* To a new edition of the *Euchiridion*, published at Basle in August, 1518, Erasmus prefixed an epistle to Paul Volzcius, abbot of the monastery of Curia Hugonis, in which he denounced the Sorbonnic sophistries, the needless accumulation of observances, and all the Antichristian systems and vices of the day, in the same earnest and philanthropic tone which dignifies the work itself. It is curious that the same volume of his works (vol. v.) which contains the *Enchiridion* contains also a long prayer to the Virgin Mary by the same author, to be used in seasons of adversity.

this or that teacher may think to be true. As bonds, deeds, covenants, obligations, indentures, expressed in a multitude of words, afford matter for lawsuits; so in religion a profusion of determinations, decrees and decisions begets endless controversies.”*

We are informed by Mattæus that, when Ignatius Loyola, in his early years, before his religious principles or projects were fixed, applied to the *Enchiridion* of Erasmus for spiritual edification, he presently laid the book aside in disappointment and distaste. His enthusiasm was chilled, his aspirations were checked and humbled; at the homely aspect of a moral religion the imagination shrank away, and the rising swell of fanaticism subsided. It was natural in Loyola that it should be thus. Yet the creed which offended him was just as far from giving satisfaction to Luther. It seemed equally cold and inanimate when put in contrast with his burning faith. And its author, through that fatality which pursues moderate opinions, in religious even more than in other disputes, lived to hear the calumnious imputation of Arianism both from the one party and from the other.

Even as early as 1516, before his name was known beyond the precincts of Wittemberg, Luther expressed to Spalatin, as has been already related, his dissent from the doctrine of Erasmus. He objected to the preference given by the latter to the writings of Jerome over those of Augustine; he observed that it was an error to inter-

* This letter was written at Louvain, Nov. 1, 1519, in answer to a “*prolixa epistola*” of the Bohemian. . . “*Ut intelligamus, omnem spem nostram in Deo positam esse, qui gratis nobis largitur omnia per Filium Jesus Christum. Hujus morte nos esse redemptos, in hujus corpus nos insitos esse per baptismum, . . . ut ita sane progrediamur a virtute in virtutem, ut nihil tamen nobis arrogemus, sed quicquid est boni Deo transcribamus . . .*”

pret the law to relate to ceremonial observances only, since the whole Decalogue was properly included under the same head; and then, after expounding his own principles of justification, he proceeded: "I beg that you will put Erasmus in mind of these things. As, on the one hand, I hope and wish that he may be celebrated throughout the Christian world, so, on the other, I fear that many may be induced by the authority of his name to patronise that literal and lifeless mode of interpreting Scripture, into which almost all commentators have fallen since the time of Augustine."

It was the want of "life" in the theology of Erasmus which alike offended the Jesuit and the Augustinian, though for perfectly different reasons; and from a letter written to Zwingli before the death of Leo X. it would seem that the Christian moralist did not so much as understand the ground of his difference with the latter. "Luther," he says, "has written to Œcolampadius that I have made no great progress in the things which are of the Spirit; now I would willingly learn from you, most learned Zwingli, what Spirit it is that he means. For I appear to myself to have taught almost all the doctrines which Luther teaches, though I have taught them with less violence,* and have abstained from certain enigmas and paradoxes. I pray that the Lord Jesus may direct and prosper your spirit." Yet had he not taught that one doctrine which in Luther's mind was all-im-

* "Non tam atrociter." In the same letter Erasmus mentions that he had addressed various admonitions to the Pope in a mild though decided tone. "Scripsi ei privatim prolixam epistolam liberrime. Nihil respondet; vereor ne sit offensus. Eam si legisses, diceret me non esse blandum, quum se dat occasio. Et liberior essem, si viderem me profecturum. Dementire est tibi perniciem accersere, si nulli prosis. Ego florentissimam regionem reliqui, ne miscrerer negotio Pharisaico. . . Pontificia tyrannis his placet, quibus displicet Lutherus. . ." Apud Gerdes. Hist. Evang. Renov. tom. i. sect. 70.

portant, the very essence and substance of the Christian profession.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding this one great difference, there were very many important matters on which they agreed, and on all of which the opinions of Erasmus had been loudly expressed before the beginning of the Reformation. First, they were earnestly desirous to assist the progress of literature, and open its various departments for the amelioration of mankind. Indeed, as a speculative promoter of general learning, Erasmus was far the more conspicuous; when he saw the earlier proceedings of Luther, and supposed, as seemed then most probable, that they would end in discomfiture and disgrace, his chief apprehension was, lest the cause of letters should suffer together with that of religion. And on this ground he even dissuaded certain booksellers from printing the works of the Reformer. He loved learning too much for itself, too little for its consequences; and so peaceful was his temper that, though he had foreseen those consequences, he would have preferred their gradual development, in patient endurance of the established oppression, to any violent assertion of intellectual independence. In fact, though he and Luther were both devoted to the interests of literature, and both hostile to the corruption of the church, devotion to literature was predominant in the one, while indignation at the ecclesiastical iniquities harrowed up the soul of the other.*

By his severe and popular sarcasms against the abuses of the monastic condition, and the general ignorance, stupidity, immorality and impiety of those who professed

* On Sept. 9, 1521, Luther thus wrote to Spalatin: "*Erasmmum à cognitione gratiæ longinquum esse video, qui non ad crucem sed ad pacem spectat in omnibus scriptis. Hinc omnia putat civiliter et benevolentia quadam humanitatis tractanda gerendaque. Sed hanc non curat Behemoth, neque hunc quicquam vere emendat.*"

it, Erasmus had produced a very deep impression on the minds of the laity, and created a stronger and more extensive spirit of practical reformation than perhaps he intended. At least he did not intend that it should have operated as it did. He wished the Reformation to proceed from the Pope, from the hierarchy, from cardinals, bishops and abbots, not from the people—not aware how very rare it is that any profitable evils, ecclesiastical or civil, are removed by the hands which reap the profit, except on popular compulsion. But Luther soon discovered this secret; and turning his whole force in the direction in which it was effectually felt, he produced results from which the half-informed virtue of Erasmus shrank away with terror. Yet had Erasmus greatly contributed to those results.* And in this matter the doctrinal difference subsisting between him and Luther did not so operate as to restrain the zeal of either. Since the system of satisfactions and observances established by the monks, to say nothing of their individual vices, was as abhorrent from the pure practical piety of the former—a religion of good habits on Christian principles—as from the all-absorbing faith of the latter—a religion of absolute self-devotion and dependence on the cross of the Redeemer.

Another very important subject of agreement between them was their common detestation of the scholastic system of theology. In this respect, likewise, the labours of Erasmus prepared the triumph of his successor.† The

* “I have laid the egg,” said Erasmus, “but Luther has hatched another bird.”

† One Martin Dorpius, a divine of Louvain, censured the *Moriæ Encomium*. The reply of Erasmus contained one of his attacks on the scholastics: “I should like to know what is the connexion between Christ and Aristotle? what has your captious sophism to do with the mysteries of eternal wisdom? To what end are all these labyrinths of

editions which he published of several of the ancient fathers were perhaps chiefly profitable to this purpose ; because they enabled men to observe that the authorities which they had been taught most to reverence had employed in their theological controversies, not the complicated tactics of Aristotle, but the simple method of common sense and reason. And this was to undermine the strongest of all the defences by which the church was surrounded. For as the battle, to all appearance, was to be fought by appeals to the understanding and feelings of the body of the people, it was necessary to divest the religious discussion of all the refinements of ingenuity, and to render it intelligible to uncultivated minds. Besides which, if the truth, as the reformers thought, was decidedly on their side, it was their interest to banish from the controversy everything savouring of sophistry—all those little devices and artifices of ratiocination which are only useful as means of deception. Towards the accomplishment of this essential and very difficult part of their undertaking, Erasmus had done them good service by his preliminary exertions.

But the work by which he most effectually aided the cause was his edition of the New Testament, published in 1516. This was received with an eagerness which sufficiently proved that men's minds were prepared for some change in religious matters, and were thirsting for

questions? many of them are useless, many pestilent, if only because they beget contentions and dissensions. . . It is a part of science to be ignorant of many matters, on which is sounder wisdom to doubt than to decide. . . The thing is come to this, that it now hangs not on the commandment of Christ, but on the definitions of the scholastics and the power of the bishops. And matters are thus involved in such utter confusion as to leave no hope of restoring the world to true Christianity. . .” Providentially, Luther did not despond so readily.

some more evangelical system. Facilities were now afforded for comparing the practice of the church with the precepts of the gospel. Multitudes, before in darkness, had now the means of ascertaining with their own eyes whether the doctrine, the spirit, the person of Christ were really represented by the Bishop of Rome, or insulted by him; whether the numberless ordinances and observances which were imposed upon mankind as essential to salvation had any foundation whatsoever in the book which alone reveals salvation; in short, whether the religion in which they had been educated was what it professed to be, the gift of a benevolent Providence, or the handiwork of an artful and faithless priesthood, building up power and wealth for their own order upon the credulity of all mankind.

Some suspicions on this subject had been already awakened, and now, through the more general dissemination of the law of Christ, they were converted into certainty. This certainty could not long remain a lifeless discovery. It was sure presently to produce some practical result. Besides the mere abstract love of truth and hatred of imposture, by which man, through God's redeeming blessing on his corrupt nature, is sometimes moved to generous actions and great sacrifices, there is a sense of common advantage which leagues people together in opposition to injustice and fraud, as well as in support of them; and it is certain that all those who are not personally interested in the defence of a vicious system are personally—though remotely perhaps or indirectly—interested in its overthrow.

Thus important and numerous were the subsidiary materials supplied by Erasmus towards the foundation of a purer religious system, before Luther had taken any step, or even formed any project, with that view. After-

wards by his excellent paraphrases* on the New Testament he increased the mass of religious knowledge and promoted the rational interpretation of the sacred writings. And these labours, though they might convey no direct attack on the existing ecclesiastical system nor any allusion to the disputes then commencing, yet were eminently useful to the cause which sought its authority in Scripture only, and made its perpetual appeal to the clearest and most obvious application of the words of Scripture. The sincere searcher after truth would not fail to read in the Commentaries of Erasmus a calm but vivid illustration of the Polemics of Luther; and having there imbibed many valuable lessons of Christian holiness and some portion of the spirit of the Gospel, he would bring himself first to understand, and then to pardon, and then perhaps to admire, those impetuous bursts of religious indignation which broke forth, to the dismay of many timid minds, from the burning bosom of the reformer.

When the attention of the whole Christian world was arrested by the first proceedings of Luther, and the rights of the dispute began to be discussed in private as well as in public, among the great and the learned as well as among the humble, it became a question, and at that moment an important question, whether of the two parties would receive the support of Erasmus. The prince and zealot of literature, the eloquent denouncer of ecclesiastical abuses, the restorer of some holy principles of evangelical morality—it was naturally expected that he would incline to those with whom his habits of thinking and speaking and writing immediately connected him. All that was pure and noble in his cha-

* They were published in January, 1522, and dedicated to Charles V.; and they were acknowledged by that prince in very flattering expressions.

racter was already in alliance with Luther ; and thus it proved that his first impulse did carry him in that direction.

In the first instance, before it could be foreseen what extensive consequences would proceed from Luther's beginnings, Erasmus, judging them freely and by the light of his own intelligence, gave them his decided approbation. An epistle addressed by him to Frederick in the year 1519* contained the following expressions: "Certain lucubrations of Martin Luther have been lately published, and a report was spread that this man had been overwhelmed by the authority of the Cardinal of St. Sixtus. How the enemies of learning triumphed and exulted at this! How they rejoiced to have found at length what seemed to them so favourable an opportunity for an attack upon letters, upon the three languages, upon eloquence and all polite literature—as if Luther placed his trust in them, or as if heresies proceeded from such sources! . . . Luther is as unknown to me as he can be to any man, so that I cannot be suspected of any personal partiality to him. Nor is it my business either to defend or censure his lucubrations, since I have hitherto read them only cursorily. But the character of the man no one who knows it can help approving, since it is very far removed from every suspicion of avarice or ambition; and the innocence of his morals might find favour even among Gentiles. How inconsistent then with theological gentleness to rage with atrocity against the name and person of a virtuous man, without so much as reading his book, and to address these railings to the ill-informed ill-judging multitude! Besides, he did no more than propose theses for disputation, and submitted

* This epistle is not contained in the volume of Erasmus's Letters; but it is given by Seckendorf, l. i. sect. 27, § 65, addit.

to the judgment of all to whom it became him to submit. No one admonished him, no one instructed him, no one confuted him; they only shout out Heretic! and by seditious clamouring rouse people to violence against him. They seem indeed to thirst for human blood, rather than the salvation of souls.”*

After some admirable exhortations to religious moderation, directed against the enemies of Luther, the writer proceeds: “If they will have us receive as oracular everything that proceeds from the schools, why do the schools dissent from each other? Why do the scholastic doctors contend and war together? Nay, why in the same Sorbonne does one theologian differ from another? In fact, you will find very few who are in concord, unless they be in conspiracy. Besides, they find many things to condemn in the books of moderns which in Gerson or Augustine they do not condemn, as if truth were altered with its author. Those whom they adopt they read in such a manner that they will pervert everything rather than censure anything; those against whom they are prejudiced they so interpret as to calumniate everything that they find. The best part of Christianity is a life worthy of Christ. And whenever we find that, we ought not hastily to admit the suspicion of heresy.† . . . These

* “*Nemo monuit, nemo docuit, nemo revicit; tantum vociferantur Hereticum! Seditiosis clamoribus ad lapides provocant. Dicas eos sitire sanguinem humanum, non salutem animarum. . . .*”

† “*Optima Christianismi pars est vita Christo digna; quæ cum suppetit, non debet esse facilis hæreseos suspicio.*” It is curious to contrast this principle with another, very much in favour with the high Papists, and asserted by Aleander himself before the Diet of Worms: That where the suspicion of heresy attaches, the life cannot be worthy of Christ. Both parties agreed that a good life and heresy were scarcely compatible; only, in applying this their common axiom, they began at different ends. “Prove the life to be pious,” said Erasmus, “and I will not easily be-

things, most illustrious duke, I write the more freely as the Lutheran cause does not in any way regard me. But, as it belongs to your lofty dignity to protect the Christian religion, so it belongs to your prudence and to your justice not to allow any innocent man to be sacrificed, under the pretence of piety, to the impiety of any one. The same is the wish of Pope Leo, to whom nothing is dearer than the security of innocence. He loves to be called Father, and takes no pleasure in those who exercise tyranny in his name. And that man is most obedient to the dispositions of the pontiff, who most faithfully executes what is just. I know not what is thought of Luther at Rome, but here I certainly observe that the best men are those who most eagerly read his books. Though, for my own part, I have not yet had leisure to peruse them." The Elector sent two replies to this letter to the effect already stated: that he was pleased to be assured of the favour which Lutheranism had found among the learned and pious; that Luther himself was universally admired both for the integrity of his life and his solid erudition; yet that the protection which had been hitherto afforded him was given to his cause, not to his person; and that it always would be so continued as to preserve men of merit and innocence from the malice of interested persecutors.

In the same year, on the 28th of March, Luther made overtures to the prince of letters in the most respectful and courteous expressions, some of which it is only fair to record, that the reader may contrast them with some later effusions of the writer on the same subject:

"How constantly I am conversing with you and you

lieve the heresy." "Prove the heresy," said Aleander, "and I will not credit the piety."

with me, Erasmus, our honour and hope, yet are we still unacquainted! . . . For who is there, the very bottom of whose heart is not entirely occupied by Erasmus? who is there whom Erasmus does not instruct, in whom Erasmus does not reign?—of those, I mean, who love literature: for I rejoice that among the other gifts of Christ you have received this likewise, that many dislike you—by which test alone I am wont to discern the gifts of a merciful from those of an angry God. Wherefore I congratulate you that, while all good men are delighted with you, you displease those who wish alone to preside and please. But how vain am I to approach a man like you with hands thus unwashed, without any preface of reverence or honour, like an intimate acquaintance, though absolutely unknown to him! . . . Wherefore, my beloved Erasmus, if it thus seem good to you, acknowledge this your humble brother in Christ, who is most desirous of your favour, as he is most devoted to your person, though through his ignorance he deserves no better than to lie buried in obscurity and unknown even to the common sun of heaven—and such indeed has even been my ardent wish, proceeding from the consciousness of my own destitution. . . .”*

At the end of the May following Erasmus replied to Luther from Louvain in complimentary but cautious terms, disclaiming any connexion with his party and recommending to him the practice of mildness and mode-

* Dated Wittenberg, March 28, 1519. “*Nam satis gaudeo quod inter cætera Christi dona etiam hoc numeratur, quod multis displices; quo ego argumento soleo discernere dona clementis Dei a donis irati . . . Sed ego stultus qui te talem virum sic illotis manibus, absque reverentiæ et honoris præfatione veluti familiarissimus aggredior, ignotum ignotus . . . Ita mi Erasme, vis amabilis, si tibi ita visum fuerit, agnosce et hunc fraterculum in Christo tui certe studiosissimum et amantissimum, cæterum pro inscitia sua nihil meritum, quam et in angulo sepultus communi etiam cælo et soli ignotus esset. . . .*”

ration: "Most beloved Brother in Christ,—Your letter was delightful to me, both as indicating genius and breathing the spirit of Christ. I cannot express what tragedies your tracts have excited here; nor even yet can the utterly false suspicion be rooted out of men's minds that your lucubrations were composed by my aid, and that I am the standard-bearer of this faction, as they call it. And so some think that they have got a handle for the extinction of literature. . . . The whole affair is conducted by vociferation, violence, and every sort of virulence and slander, so that, had I not seen with my own eyes and felt too that it is thus, I could never have believed that there could be such madness among theologians. It is a plague raging among them. . . . I protested that you were wholly unknown to me, that I had not yet read your books, that I neither disapproved of anything nor approved of anything. . . . There are persons of great distinction in England who highly approve of your writings. Here too you have advocates, and among them one of most excellent character. For my own part I keep clear of all parties, that I may serve, as far as I can, the revival of literature; and I think one does more good by civility and moderation than by violence. It was thus that Christ brought mankind under his government. It was thus that St. Paul abrogated the Jewish ritual. It is better to complain of those who abuse the authority of the pontiff than of the pontiffs themselves; and I would make the same remark respecting kings. We may argue as strongly as we can against notions that have long prevailed, but we should never contradict them positively. It is more effectual to despise the virulent abuse of some than to retort it. On every occasion we should avoid arrogant and factious language, than which nothing can be more opposite to the spirit of Christianity. At the same time we should

keep a strict watch over our motives. Anger, hatred, vainglory, lay snares for us, even when we are most piously employed. I do not say these things to you by way of admonition, but only that you may persevere in your present course.* Your Commentaries on the Psalms please me exceedingly, and I hope they will do much good. The prior of the monastery at Antwerp says he was formerly one of your scholars. He is a man of real primitive Christianity, and loves you most cordially. He is almost the only one who preaches Jesus Christ. The rest in general either aim at lucre or treat the people with old women's fables. May the Lord Jesus daily bestow upon you more plentifully his own spirit, for the glory of his name and the public good! Farewell."

In the following year (Sept. 9, 1520), after the publication of the bull, Erasmus thus wrote to Noviomagus: "I fear for the unfortunate Luther, so violent is the conspiracy and so strongly have the princes, and especially the Pope, been instigated against him. Would to God he had followed my counsel and had abstained from odious and seditious proceedings! he would then have done more good and incurred less hatred. It would be no great matter that one man should perish, but if these people (the monks) get the better, their insolence will become intolerable; they will never rest till they have ruined all literature, &c. &c." These few words appear to me to contain two great mistakes, proceeding the one from the moral timidity of their author, the other from his literary exclusiveness. Had Luther pursued the advice of Erasmus and frittered away the strength of his cause and the substance of his principles in smooth insinuations and

* "Hæc scribo, non ut admoneam quid facias, sed ut quod facis perpetuo facias."

polished sarcasms, he would have conciliated few enemies, while he certainly would have formed no party. And the monks, had they destroyed Luther, would not have advanced one step thereby towards the destruction of literature—on which his work by no means rested, and of which the progress was already assured by a combination of general causes, too large perhaps for the acute but limited capacity of Erasmus.

We collect even from these short abstracts that the vows of Erasmus were on the side of the reformer, though his temper and habits and the unreasonable apprehension, lest letters should suffer by connexion with an unsuccessful struggle for the revival of religion, led him to refuse his co-operation, and possibly to dissemble the extent of his sympathy. The same appear to have been the sentiments which he brought with him in 1520 to Cologne. Then the nuncios made some vain attempts to decide him; and it would seem that during the same year offers of high preferment were made him, if he would enter the lists against the heretic.* But it did not suit his wavering character and contradictory principles to compromise himself on either side. He pleaded, "That he had not sufficiently studied the writings of Luther; that he had no leisure for so great an enterprise; that it was above his abilities;† that the task had been under-

* In the above letter to Noviomagus Erasmus asserts that a bishopric was at his disposal on those terms:—"Ego me huic tragediæ non misceo. Alioqui paratus est vel episcopatus, si velim in Lutherum scribere. Mihi dolet sic obrui doctrinam evangelicam nosque cogi tantum, non doceri; et doceri ea a quibus abhorrent et sacræ literæ et sensus communis. . . ."

† It was on this occasion that he is related to have replied to the nuncios, "Major est Lutherus quam ut in illum scribam ego. Major est quam ut a me intelligatur. Planè Lutherus tantus est, ut plus erudiar et proficiam ex lectione unius pagellæ Lutheranæ, quam ex toto Thoma." Oper. Luth., tom. ii. fol. 316. Maimburg considers Erasmus as no

taken by certain universities, whom he wished not to deprive of that honour ; that he should incur the displeasure of many powerful persons, supporters of Luther." By such feeble reasons he excused his neutrality to the papal party. On the other hand, Frederick, probably desirous to secure for the reformers the authority of a great name, certainly anxious to collect the sincere opinions of every learned and pious man on a subject necessarily so perplexing to a layman and a prince, sent to desire a personal interview with Erasmus. The latter obeyed, and the conference took place in the presence of only one other person, Spalatin, who published the following relation of the circumstances :

It was the beginning of December, and the parties conversed standing by the fireside. Frederick first proposed that they should communicate in Dutch, the native language of Erasmus ; but he preferred Latin, which the Elector thoroughly understood without professing to speak it ; accordingly, Spalatin acted as his interpreter. After the usual preliminary civilities Frederick opened the discourse by expressing his horror of heresy and his wish to be swallowed up alive, rather than give it any reception or favour. " But, if Luther teaches the truth, I will never suffer any one to oppress him, whatsoever risk there may be, either to myself or to those about me, in defending him. I admit that the subjects in controversy are placed above my knowledge, and I do not pretend to judge whether Luther be right or not ; I want information and the counsel of the learned. I have therefore invited you hither that I may learn your

better than a Lutheran at this period ; and even ascribes much of Luther's consideration to the countenance of the other. No doubt in certain quarters this would have its weight, but not in those where the battle was to be decided. Besides, it was too faint to operate very forcibly anywhere.

sentiments on this matter, and I conjure you to tell me them with sincerity." Erasmus stood for a short time musing, with his lips pressed together, and delayed to answer;* while the prince, as he was wont when discoursing on a serious subject, fixed his eyes steadily and gravely upon his face. At length Erasmus broke silence in these words: "Luther has committed two sins; he has touched the Pope upon the crown and the monks upon the belly."† Upon which the Elector smiled; and he always remembered that answer, and repeated it a short time before his death. Erasmus then subjoined with earnestness that Luther had done well in the censures which he cast on the abuses of the church; that these absolutely required correction; that the substance of his doctrine was true, but that there was a want of moderation in his manner of advancing it.

He then retired with Spalatin, at whose request and for the information of his master he wrote down his thoughts concerning the affair of Luther, in a number of short and precise sentences called "Axioms."‡ The following is the substance of the most important among them; and it is proper to make them known as expressing the views, not of Erasmus only, but probably of many enlightened spectators who had hitherto taken no part in the dispute:—

"The origin of the thing" (said Erasmus) "is in evil—a hatred of literature and a lust of tyranny. The

* "*Lutherana Tragedia*," says Erasmus, in a letter written during this same year, "in tantam evasit contentionem, ut nec loqui tutum sit, nec tacere." In the present instance, however, as it proved, silence would have been the better policy.

† "*Lutherus peccavit in duobus; nempe quod tetigit coronam pontificis et ventres monachorum.*"

‡ "*Axiomata Erasmi Rot. pro causa Martini Lutheri theologi, &c.*" Published among Luther's works, tom. ii. fol. 314.

mode of action corresponds with the origin—they work by clamours, conspiracies, bitter hatreds and virulent writings. The agents are suspected, because the best and most evangelical persons are those least offended with Luther. The facility of the Pope is notoriously abused, so that all precipitation should be avoided. The affair is advancing towards a greater catastrophe than some imagine. The ferocity of the bull is offensive to all good persons, as unbecoming the gentle character of the Vicar of Christ. Only two universities in so great a multitude have condemned Luther—condemned, but not confuted him—and even these do not agree. To all just people his demand seems just, to be admitted to a public disputation and to submit to impartial judges. Luther seeks nothing for himself, only for others—therefore is he less to be suspected. It seems to be for the interest and dignity of the Pope that the matter should be set at rest by grave persons, of unquestioned integrity, on mature deliberation. Those who have hitherto written against Luther are censured even by the theologians who differ from him. The world is thirsting for evangelical truth, and is carried in this direction by a heaven-inspired eagerness: wherefore such a passionate resistance ought not perhaps to be offered.”*

The circumstances which followed deserve mention, not only as characteristic of Erasmus, but as having probably influenced his subsequent feelings and conduct towards the reformers. No sooner had Spalatin retired to communicate the “Axioms” to the Elector than he became sensible of his indiscretion in having committed opinions of so decided a nature to writing. Accordingly, he instantly sent and entreated that the paper might be

* “Mundus sitit veritatem evangelicam et fatali quadam desiderio videtur huc ferri. Unde forte adeo non oportet odiose resisti.” Axiom. D. Erasmi. Op. Luth. t. ii. fol. 314.

restored, lest it should bring down on him the indignation of Aleander. The paper was restored; but it was previously copied, and its contents communicated, as seems most probable, to many, for they were soon afterwards published at Leipzig, together with an account of the conference with the Elector. Both Luther and Spalatin earnestly denied that they had any share in this breach of confidence. The act was even imputed to some papist who designed to commit Erasmus in opposition to a party capable of treating him so treacherously. However this may be, Erasmus was deeply and reasonably offended, if not by the perfidy, at least by the indiscretion of those whom he had trusted, and even disclaimed some of the opinions ascribed to him; while Aleander, from being his friend and even patron, became at once and continued ever afterwards a dangerous and implacable enemy.*

* In a letter to Nicholas Everard, President of Holland, Erasmus, after insinuating how the enemies of the Roman See are sometimes removed by poison, "*cum benedictione pontificis*," continued as follows: "*Hac arte valet Aleander. Is me coloniæ impensissime rogabat ad prandium. Ego quo magis ille instabat, eo pertinacius excusavi. Aleander is great in this art. When we were at Cologne he used continually to be asking me to dinner. The more he pressed me the more perseveringly I declined.*" Aleander had been secretary to Cæsar Borgia.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DIET OF WORMS.

The Diet convoked to Worms—Charles summons Luther—Frederick hesitates—Luther is ready to obey—his religious motives—his second letter to the Elector on this subject—great exertions of the Papists—Luther condemned in the bull *In Cæna Domini*—difficulties and divisions of the Papists—they begin to fear his appearance at Worms—and endeavour to prevent it—efforts of Aleander to gain the members of the Diet—his speech in Diet of February 13, and its temporary success—proposals of moderate constitutional reform by Erasmus, Faber, and Glapio—remarks—character and stratagems of Glapio—foiled by Frederick—Charles determines to hear Luther, but not in his defence, and orders the sequestration of his books—Luther sets out on his journey to Worms—his treatment in the course of it—the fears of his friends—his own intrepidity—at Oppenheim Sickingen and other adherents offer him a refuge and persuade flight—Luther's unshaken firmness—he enters Worms in triumphal procession.

THE first Diet under the newly-elected sovereign was summoned to meet at Worms on the 6th of January, 1521; and among the various subjects of general moment which claimed the attention of that assembly the affair of Luther was not by any means forgotten. And though the mind of a young prince, who was neither entirely German nor even conversant through residence with German opinions and feelings, might attach more importance to the projects of civil ambition, the movements of armies and the policy of monarchs, than to the speculations of a monk, yet were there those about his court who inculcated that there was no duty so truly imperial as the extirpation of heresy.

Accordingly, on November 28, 1520, the Emperor

wrote to Frederick to the effect that he had been much solicited by the papal nuncios respecting the affair of Luther and the burning of his books; that, as he knew the Elector's unwillingness* to condemn either him or them without an impartial examination, he requested him to bring the accused to Worms, there to be heard and questioned by persons duly qualified, and in the mean time to prevent him from publishing any new scandals. The Elector (in an answer of the 20th of December) declined, with much cautious explanation and many respectful expressions, to comply with that request. In the mean time he had taken means to ascertain what were the feelings of Luther himself in regard to the proposal of the Emperor. Frederick no doubt believed that to present Luther at Worms, in the midst of his enemies and at their instigation, would be no better than to deliver him up to certain destruction. Besides, he might not choose to compromise himself so far in that affair. It was his policy to refrain from any direct interference with its course; and though he watched it with a friendly eye, he abstained from any attempt to guide it. Therefore he now determined not to undertake the responsibility of producing Luther before the Diet, but to leave the decision and its consequences to the Reformer and his friends.

The determination of Luther was dictated by the deep sincerity of his religious confidence, and was even especially marked by his habitual intrepidity. He replied to Spalatin (on the 21st of December) that, should he be summoned to Worms by the high authority of the Emperor, he should obey, as he should obey the will of God; that if violence were offered to himself he should

* The Elector had requested Charles, through the prefect of Holland, not to condemn Luther without trial, "for fear of giving a handle to the multitude—*ne turbis ansa daretur.*"—Seckend., l. i. sect. 89, addit. ii.

recommend his cause to God; yet that it was the duty of all to beseech God that the reign of Charles might not commence in blood, shed in an impious cause. "I would prefer, as I have often declared, to perish by the hands of the Romanists alone, rather than that he or his advisers should have any share in the crime. You know what misery befel the Emperor Sigismund after the execution of Huss. Yet if it must be so, and if I am to be delivered up, not only to the pontifical but to the secular authorities, the Lord's will be done. Amen. You have my resolution. Expect from me anything rather than flight or recantation. I will not fly; still less can I retract; and so may the Lord Jesus comfort me. I could do neither, without risk to piety and the salvation of many souls."*

About a month after (January 25, 1521) he addressed to the Elector himself a second letter on the same subject, in a somewhat different tone, but in exactly the same spirit: "I rejoice from my heart," he said, "that the Emperor is about to undertake the management of this cause, which is indeed the cause of the whole Christian world in general and of the German nation in particular. . . . And I now humbly offer, as I have repeatedly offered before, to do all that may become a servant of God and of Christ, as soon as I shall be informed what my duty is from the clear evidence of the Holy Scriptures. . . . In regard to myself, when I shall be provided with a safe-conduct, I shall most cheerfully appear before the next general Diet at Worms; and there by the help of Almighty God so conduct myself before just, learned and impartial judges, as to convince all that I have done nothing from an inconsiderate, rash, refractory spirit, or with a view to temporal

* Ap. Seckend., lib. i. § 90.

honours or advantages ; but that every line I have written and every doctrine I have taught proceeded from a conscientious regard to my oath and obligations as a teacher, however unworthy, of God's word ; that I have constantly intended to promote the praise and glory of God, the happiness and salvation of the Catholic church, the prosperity of all Germany, the extirpation of dangerous abuses and superstitions, and the emancipation of the whole Christian republic from innumerable, impious, tyrannical and disgraceful grievances and blasphemies."

Meanwhile the authorities at Rome continued consistently to pursue the decided policy which they had at last adopted. On the 3rd of January, 1521, while the members of the Diet were assembling, the Pope published a second bull against Luther, in confirmation of his first ; for whereas the sentence contained in the first had been conditional on his retracting or not within a prescribed period, that in the second was unconditional, as that period had then expired. In this condemnation all his followers of all ranks and conditions were included. The priests were commanded to raise aloud the cry of heresy, to denounce the offenders from the pulpit, and to lift up the standard of the cross, with the ringing of bells, the casting down of lights on the ground, and all the other imposing ceremonies of interdict. The archbishops and other prelates were directed not to stand quietly by like dumb dogs which cannot bark, but to vociferate loudly and incessantly to the same purpose ; while the monks of all orders and classes were to swell the chorus of anathema.

This formidable bolt fell absolutely harmless and almost unnoticed among the people of Germany. It was followed by another of the same description which was equally innocent. It was the practice of the Roman

church to repeat annually on Easter Thursday, by a public act, its solemn denunciation of every form and name of heresy. This was performed by the proclamation of the famous bull *In Cœna Domini*, which was this year extended to comprehend Luther, together with all his followers and all who showed him any favour or protection. As far as either of these measures had any effect, it was adverse to the interests of Rome, in as far as the honour of the See was still more deeply compromised to a system of overbearing tyranny, and thus deprived of the possible resource of decent and politic concession. In respect to the latter, it only drew from Luther some very severe animadversions, which he afterwards published along with the bull itself, as one additional evidence of the injustice and absurdity of the principles of Rome.

In the mean time Worms was the scene on which the craftier devices of pontifical diplomacy were brought into operation. The Pope's party was extremely powerful: it embraced all the Italians and all the Spaniards, and the great majority even of the German nobles. Charles was surrounded by the enemies of Luther, who misrepresented his doctrines and his actions. He was too young to form any sober or independent judgment on so difficult a question, and his imperial prejudices inclined him to the defence of the established authorities. On the other side there was not yet, at Worms at least, anything that could be called a party. There were many individuals who detested the abominations of Rome, who respected the voice of the Reformer, and who hoped much more from his projects than they feared: some very few there were who even avowed their adhesion to him. But Frederick, on whom all eyes were directed, carefully refrained from giving any open countenance either to the opinions or the acts of his subject; while all those who

detested his principles—all those who were attached through interest, through habit, through ignorance, through zeal for their order, through fear of change, through love of the very abuses denounced, to the existing system—were boldly and undisguisedly leagued and banded together for the extirpation of its enemies, for so they called its reformers. At their head was Aleander, than whom no one was more abundantly endowed with the various qualities requisite to conduct them to victory.

Yet, powerful as they seemed and were, and unanimously as their wishes and exertions were turned to one single object, the destruction of the doctrine and if possible of the person of Luther, their surest means of accomplishing this were by no means obvious. The firm though cautious attitude of the Elector presented a perpetual obstacle, perceptible even to the blindest among them; while those who saw somewhat more deeply into the real nature of the affair understood that there was a power without the Diet which could not be neglected with safety—the ardour with which the mass of the German people had embraced the cause of the Reformation. Neither were the principles of common sense and justice without advocates among the members of this proud assembly.

It would seem to have been the first design of Luther's enemies to arraign him before the Diet, to procure what seemed almost certain, his condemnation, and then to proceed if possible to his execution. He had himself so constantly demanded a public trial, that his friends could scarcely have murmured against such a method of proceeding. Yet even here arose a difficulty almost insuperable. The question was one of faith; it had been already solemnly decided by the Pope himself, the final appeal on all such matters; he had proclaimed his decision by repeated edicts: it would there-

fore be a breach of the statutes of the church, and an insult to the majesty of the Pontiff, to re-examine, especially in a court consisting partly of laymen, doctrines previously condemned by that authority. Besides, Luther at once expressed his voluntary determination to appear at Worms—an act of courage and at the same time of obedience for which the papists were probably not prepared. Accordingly, other views began to rise among them. Perhaps there was some growing apprehension lest his presence at the Diet, and the public proclamation of principles so popular before such large numbers of eminent persons, of whom many were unprejudiced and of whom most were Germans, should serve to increase his consequence and multiply his supporters. Doubtless, there were many intelligent papists who were as well acquainted as Luther with the real falsehood of their pretensions; and such would tremble at the notion of applying to them, in the face of all Christendom, what Luther was sure to apply—the test of Scripture.

And so we observe that all the talents of the papal chiefs were presently turned to prevent any such public exhibition. Their first object, of course, was to carry the cause triumphantly by the undisputed exercise of mere authority. If they should fail in this, it was their next design to repress the heresy by private negotiation. By the former course they would best maintain the ancient majesty and predominance of Rome; by the latter they would at least escape the exposure of their weakness and the disgrace of a defeat.

With these views Aleander addressed communications to Rome, urging the employment of every means to gain the members of the Diet, whether by private importunity, by promises, by flattery, or by gold. At the same time he pressed them himself with specious argu-

ments, especially with that which to all faithful papists was in fact conclusive, that no earthly assembly could have any authority to investigate a religious question, which had already been decided by the Pope. It seems however that the Emperor was not thus disposed to acquiesce in the absolute despotism of the See even in matters of faith; for his natural sense of justice had taught him that judgment ought to be preceded by trial in spiritual no less than in temporal concerns. Accordingly he admonished Aleander that it became him to explain at length to the Diet what were the sufficient reasons for Luther's condemnation; to make clear to that body that those reasons were not wholly derived from considerations of the peculiar interests of Rome, but also connected with the general well-being of the Christian faith; and to remove at the same time a not uncommon impression, that the peremptory proceedings against Luther had been occasioned not so much by any errors in his doctrine, as by his boldness in denouncing those arbitrary impositions of the apostolical chancery against which the German people had so frequently remonstrated in vain.

On this the nuncio resolved to exert all his powers; and accordingly on the 13th of February he pronounced in full Diet a vindication of the conduct of the Pope with a fierce invective against Luther.* He spoke for three hours with force and eloquence; and as he touched with great address the points where he had

* Seckendorf, lib. i. § 91, Addit., gives the substance of this speech, as reported in German from the archives of Weimar, *De Act. Comit. Wormat.*, fol. 16 et seq.; remarking that many historical points are contained in this report which are not to be found in the oration composed for the nuncio, also on the basis of official documents, by Pallavicini. From a comparison of the two we may collect the matter of the harangue with as much accuracy as is at all important.

the most specious show of reason, and where the prejudices of his hearers were the strongest, he produced for the moment a considerable effect on the assembly. The particular ends at which he aimed were, first, That Luther should not be heard in his defence before the Diet; next, That an imperial edict should be issued to enforce the pontifical bull. But in the course of his address he touched on all the topics by which he could hope either to intimidate, to irritate, or to persuade his audience. He argued: That the sect which it was now become necessary to extinguish was equally dangerous to church and to state; that, through the meditated destruction of all spiritual authority, whether of Pope or council, and of all final appeal in matters of controversy and scriptural interpretation, a state of things would arise in which there would be as many religions as men had fancies; that, by denying the existence of human liberty, and asserting that all actions good and evil were performed by an irresistible necessity, Luther opened a wide gate to immorality and authorised every sort of crime; that he deprived the sacraments of all their value by pronouncing them of no efficacy as means of grace; that he distributed to all indifferently the power of absolution; that, under the pretext of a mistaken "Christian liberty," he freed Christians from the restraint of all human laws; that he denied the obligation of any vows except such as were made solemnly to God; in short, that his principles ended in a system of universal anarchy, without laws, or hierarchy, or subordination, or obedience to the church, or to temporal sovereigns, or even to God himself.

"His books are so crammed with heresies that they contain enough to justify the burning of an hundred thousand heretics. . . He has undertaken the defence not only of John Huss but of Wicliff too, that impious blasphemous who denied the real presence of the body of

Christ in the sacrament and the obligation of Christians to obey the civil authorities. . . He has sinned against the powers below by denying purgatory, though that dogma was established at the Council of Florence in the presence of the Emperor of Constantinople, who then acknowledged the Pope as œcumenic bishop. . . He has sinned against the powers above by writing that if an angel from heaven were to tell him such a thing he would not believe it. He has sinned against the whole clergy in his book on the Captivity of Babylon, wherein he has dared to proclaim that all Christians may perform the sacrifice. . . He has sinned against the saints by despising their books—that, for instance, of St. Dionysius of the heavenly hierarchy, which he has treated as fabulous and supposititious. He has sinned against all mankind by maintaining that those only should be condemned to death who had been convicted of mortal sin. He has sinned against the councils, especially that of Constance, which he has presumed to designate as the sink of Satan.”

The orator then expressed his surprise that any man could be esteemed an evangelical interpreter of Scripture who deviated from the church and the fathers, or a virtuous man who rejected the authority of the church: he observed that the show of piety which Luther wore was only an artifice of Satan for the seduction of mankind, and that many heretics (as was remarked by St. Jerome) had assumed a decent garb of hypocrisy; that, in respect to Luther's alleged condemnation without trial, he had been summoned to Rome with promise of safe-conduct and had disobeyed the order. And then, and above all, and in pressing terms personally addressed to the Emperor, he urged the incompetency of the present assembly to decide on matters of faith, and most of all on those on which sentence had been already pronounced by the Pope himself.

There was much in many of these arguments that was specious; there was much too, according to the principles of that age, that was true. The discourse was artfully interwoven with allusions to the venerable names and usages of antiquity, and with appeals to the fears of an aristocratical audience; and as the prerogatives of some were unquestionably endangered by the progress of the popular innovation, so was it easy to represent the harmony of the whole social system as involved in the same peril. So that Luther became the destroyer of everything sacred in heaven and on earth; and his opponents were a holy band leagued together for the preservation of religion, government, property, morality—all that is respectable and valuable among men.

When a clamour on such topics is once raised by the interested, and supported, as it may always be, by plausible appeals to timidity and selfishness, it invariably imposes upon many weak and wavering minds. And thus the speech of Aleander doubtless performed its office in confirming some languid friends and reanimating their torpid devotion to the papal See.

Meanwhile there were men of more moderate principles, and others assuming through policy a pretence of moderation, who were desirous to find some peaceful expedient for composing the difference and releasing the Pope, without much loss of credit, from a situation of obvious perplexity. They perceived and dreaded the impression which the writings of Luther had made upon the mass of the German people and upon the most intelligent in other nations; and they now discovered that the simple act of papal condemnation was far from removing that impression; in fact, through an opinion of partiality and injustice, it only roused a new feeling in favour of the persecuted. Some project must therefore be devised which might at the same time disarm the

reformer and satisfy the people. Three individuals were variously distinguished in this attempt, though there was no essential difference in the projects respectively proposed by them—John Faber, prior of the Dominican monastery at Augsburg; Glapio, a Franciscan, confessor to the Emperor; and Erasmus.

The project of Erasmus, a valuable and elaborate performance, is ascribed by Van der Hardt, for it bears no date, to the year 1519; it was probably composed somewhat earlier than the assembling of the Diet of Worms. It was entitled “The Counsel of one heartily anxious both for the dignity of the Roman Pontiff and the repose of the Christian Religion;” and the principles on which it was founded are these: That the authority of the Pope should be maintained; and that the Pope on his side should seek after nothing but the glory of God and Christ and the peace of the church, to the entire neglect of every other interest. In the first part of this document the causes and character of the actual disputes were judged for the most part according to the same views, and described sometimes almost in the same expressions, that we find in the “Axioms” of Cologne—That the first troubles were excited by the hatred of the theologians for literature, and thus, the enemies of Luther being at the same time the enemies of learning, a prejudice was created in his favour; that the intolerable excesses of the papal defenders had increased that prejudice; that Luther’s bitterness was provoked by the virulent invectives of his adversaries; who, instead of the instruction that he asked at their hands, heaped upon him nothing but condemnation; that the sentences hitherto passed on him had been passed by partial judges; that the violence of the papal bull had offended even many zealous papists; in short, that the manner of proceeding against him had excited the indignation of all learned

and pious men, and would still have done so had he been really convicted of heresy.

“Every one is agreed that the Christian church has degenerated, and requires a reformation in laws and morals such as shall bring it back to the ancient and pure evangelical doctrine. But as it is improper on the one hand rashly to undertake this reformation, so, on the other, ought there to be no rash outcry against those whose generous zeal offers, though it may be too freely, salutary counsels. . . . Of what avail is it to burn the books of Luther unless one begin by confuting them? Perhaps there will be fewer of his books in the libraries; but the opinions which they contain will remain infixed in the minds of men, until they shall be displaced by stronger reasons. There are many learned and virtuous men whose inclination to the cause of Luther is in exact proportion to their sincerity and the tenacity with which they hold to the gospel truth. Men of this character must be instructed; they will not and they ought not to be constrained. . . . Every one esteems Luther on account of the integrity of his morals. He has partisans everywhere, especially among the Germans; and even in other nations those who have the soundest understanding and those who are most free from the feelings which most warp the judgment are the men least opposed to him. Every one confesses that his books convey instruction, though some of their contents may be objectionable.”

The writer continued to plead, that in this disposition of men's feelings—with so many arguments unanswered, with so many wrongs unredressed, with the growing distaste for the ancient system of theology, and the now prevailing thirst for the doctrine of the gospel—the employment of violence would only lead to dangerous troubles and pernicious schisms. And he then suggested, as the only method of happily terminating the

dispute, to submit the decision to judges beyond suspicion of partiality. To this end it would be necessary that the Pope for this one occasion should renounce his exclusive right to determine matters of faith, and resign the question to a court constituted as follows :

“ It is my opinion that the Emperor and the Kings of England and Hungary should select in their several states certain judicious, enlightened and unbiassed persons, who, having read the books and heard the defence of Luther, should pronounce a final judgment. If the accused shall then acknowledge his errors, let his books be reprinted with the necessary corrections. But if he shall still persist in them, the authorities may proceed to the last infliction, without apprehension, because the people will then be convinced of the justice of the sentence.” He added that, if this expedient should not be accepted, there was no other remaining hope, except in a general council.

The scheme of Faber* agreed in most respects with that of Erasmus. The object of both was apparently the same—to restore peace and subordination, to arrest the further progress of Luther’s reformation, and to leave the task of restoring the evangelical purity of the church to the wisdom and the conscience of the Pope and his hierarchy. It was their principle that, though a peaceful and constitutional reformation was desirable, it was yet better to endure the continuance of the existing system

* An Abstract from this scheme is given by Seckendorf, lib. i. § 88, Addit. ii., translated from a German original in the Acts of the Diet. It is herein proposed that the Pope, the Emperor, the Kings of France, Spain, England, Portugal, Hungary and Poland, should each appoint four judges; that the Electors of the empire should severally appoint one; and that the decision of the tribunal so constituted should be final. This Faber, a Dominican of Heilbrun, is not to be confounded with John Faber, afterwards Bishop of Vienna, a very active enemy of both the German and Swiss Reformations.

than to run any risk of schism. Thus, since it was no longer safe to insult the people, it became necessary to cajole them ; and to that end the mockery of an impartial tribunal, to be appointed by princes who were members and defenders of the church, was an expedient perhaps as ingenious as could have been devised. But it was next to impossible to put it into practice. It was not probable that the Pope would make so large a concession of prerogative. It was not probable that the sovereigns of Europe not included in the arrangement, as Francis I., would abide by the decision of the nominees of their rivals. It was not probable that the Elector of Saxony would intrust the person of his subject to a court so constituted ; nor would it ever have been possible to convince the German people, who were almost the partisans of Luther, that its decision, if unfavourable, was just. The great question of a thorough reformation in the Roman church was now too deeply engraved upon too many minds to be evaded by such shallow devices ; which, though not unbecoming the conception of an obscure Dominican, were wholly unworthy of the reputed foresight and splendid reputation of Erasmus.

Yet even this project, calculated as it was to shelter the interests of the Pope, recommended a concession which five years before would have been deemed most important. It released the civil authorities from the obligation of immediately enforcing the pontifical judgments, and admitted that those judgments, even in matters of faith, were not necessarily final. This, I say, in the year 1516 would have been considered as a very bold invasion of the papal prerogative ; but in 1521 matters were so far advanced, through the almost unaided exertions of one man, and that man a monk, that it was proposed by the most rational friends of the Pope, as essential to the integrity of his domination.

Another papal agent, affecting the same moderate principles and conciliatory disposition, who played his part at this moment in the negotiations at Worms, was John Glapio, the craftiest of all the Franciscans. This monk was so well versed in the arts of dissimulation, that many years of intimate conversation were thought insufficient to give an insight into his real views,* so abundant and various were the devices and stratagems of his cunning. On this occasion an office, which placed him near to the person and confidence of the Emperor, added a certain show of authority to his counsels. He was therefore selected by Alexander as an instrument to influence the Elector of Saxony, and to gain him over, if possible, to the policy of the papal party.

With this view he addressed himself in the first instance to Frederick's chancellor, Gregory Pontanus, a minister of great worth and high in the estimation of his master. Glapio opened his diplomacy by many general commendations on the talents, virtues and productions of Luther. He had read, he said, all his earlier works with satisfaction almost unmixed; nor was there one indeed among them all liable to any serious objection except the Babylonish Captivity. This did assuredly contain many harsh and unjust expressions. He proposed therefore, with the greatest show of candour, as it were on the recommendation of others, that Luther should disclaim or retract that single work; and he suggested that, on that condition, the Pope might recall his bull of excommunication.†

* Erasmus, in his *Spongia*, written against Ulrich of Hütten, says of this Glapio that he had never dared altogether to trust him. "*Ejusque animus tam occultum esse, ut dubitet an Huttenus decem annorum conversatione illud pernoscere potuisset.*"

† "*Pontifex ex plenitudine potestatis restituere Lutherum potest.*" The account of this negotiation exists in Pontanus's handwriting in the archives of Weimar, and a long abstract from it is published by

It is difficult to believe that he had any authority to make this proposal. It was probably no more than an artifice to try the firmness of Luther, or to sound the views of his protectors. To have obtained the recantation at this moment even of one among all his productions would have been a triumph, which would have shaken the almost superstitious confidence reposed in him by the people. Pontanus replied with suspicious caution; and when the Franciscan pleaded repeatedly for a personal interview with the Elector, that favour was courteously but decidedly refused to him.

Glapio professed the most earnest desire for a searching reformation in the church, and declared that herein he did but express the determined wish of his imperial master. The stains which disfigured it were so deep as to have awakened the wrath of God, who had sent down Luther among men to pronounce His curse and to visit them for their iniquities. Yet he affected much fear, lest the violence which had lately been displayed should mar the project and defeat the hopes of the Reformer. He observed with sorrow that this last had not sufficiently considered the peculiar conjuncture of the time, the condition of mankind, and the defects of the princes of Christendom. He then insidiously suggested that the only certain method of effecting their common purpose was by *secret* deliberation; for that nothing was so pernicious in the handling of religious matters as public debate and disputation, the parents of war and sedition. And lastly, on this principle he proceeded to propose his own expedient—That the Elector should make choice of certain competent and confidential persons, with whose

Seckendorf, lib. i. § 89, Addit. ii. It is an extremely interesting specimen of ecclesiastical diplomacy; but as it was followed by absolutely no effect, I have not felt justified in inserting more than a mere abridgment of it in this history.

assistance the doctrines of Luther should be sifted and his works purified, and that both the Pope and Luther should acquiesce in that decision.

It seems improbable again that this project was advanced from the highest authority, or even with the sanction of Alexander, who had so vehemently protested against any re-examination into questions already decided by the Pope; but it was well devised to effect the purpose of the moment, and by holding out a lure to the pride of Frederick to lead him to prevent that which the papal party now most of all things dreaded—the appearance of the Reformer at Worms; but all the resources of the Franciscan were lost upon the sound understanding and upright character of Frederick. He simply refused all interference in a matter of so much delicacy; he reiterated his perpetual assertion that he had never at any time undertaken to defend the opinions of Luther; but since the truth was the common object of all, he had thought that this would be best attained if the accused should appear at Worms and be heard before that assembly. On this Glapio sighed deeply, and called God to witness his earnestness and diligence in the cause of the Reformation, and how the safety of the noble cruiser which Luther had so nearly brought into port would be endangered by this resolution. As it appeared that the Emperor had lately held some secret councils, at which Glapio had been present, respecting these affairs, the politic Elector lost not so fair an occasion to express surprise and dissatisfaction that he had himself been excluded from them.

Placed among so many conflicting opinions and interests, Charles at length decided upon a middle course: he determined that Luther should present himself before the Diet, not for the purpose of defending his opinions, but simply of giving or refusing his retraction.

Accordingly on the 6th of March he issued the brief of citation, accompanied by the necessary safe-conduct. Respecting the former of these documents it is remarked as a singular condescension that he should have addressed the excommunicated heretic "honourable, beloved, devoted."* In regard to the safe-conduct, on which the personal security of the accused did really depend, great exertions were used by his enemies to render it limited and liable to evasion, and by his friends to give it every possible force and extension. The latter succeeded, and fortified it by the signatures of several princes of the empire besides those of Charles and Frederick; while Frederick, not unmindful of the fate of Huss and the principles of Constance, by a secret negotiation afterwards brought to light, obtained from the Emperor a renunciation of the detestable doctrine established by that constitutional assembly—that there is no obligation to keep faith with heretics.

On the day following, as if to make some atonement to the papal party for the disappointment of their various projects, Charles issued a preliminary edict against the books of Luther. He commanded them to be placed in sequestration in the hands of the principal authorities till their final fate should be decided;† but the result even of so moderate a measure was far from favourable to its advisers. The Orders of the empire remonstrated to the effect that they were indeed thankful for the excellent intention displayed in this decree, but that there

* "Carolus V., honorabili nostro dilecto devoto doctore. . . . Honorabilis, dilecte, devote, quoniam nos et sacri imperii status nunc hic congregati proposuimus et conclusimus, propter et libros aliquamdiu hactenus abs te editos scrutinium de te sumere, dedimus tibi ad veniendum huc et iterum hinc ad tuam securam tuitionem nostram et imperii liberam directam securitatem et conductum, quem tibi circa hæc mittimus. . ."

† The 15th of April, which proved to be the day preceding Luther's entrance into Worms, was that fixed for the sequestering of his books there.

would now be little advantage in executing it, since the opinions of Luther were engraved in the hearts of the people. At the same time, in case he should refuse to make his recantation before the Diet, they promised that they would then lend their aid to enforce its determination. Meanwhile they besought the Emperor to direct his thoughts to the various grievances which the German people so painfully endured from the See of Rome, and to exert his authority to remove them. Charles so far attended to this solicitation that he gave immediate directions for the preparing of a memorial of the alleged grievances, and promised his assistance in relieving his subjects from them.

In reply to a letter from Spalatin communicating the proposed proceedings of the Diet and the articles which he would be expected to retract, Luther wrote, on the 19th of March, that he was unalterably decided to make no retractation; that if no more than that were required of him the journey to Worms was entirely needless; but, if his life were the real object of his enemies, still that he was ready to present himself. "If Christ Jesus do but aid me, I am determined never to fly from the field, nor desert the word of God; for I see that these bloodhounds will not desist from the pursuit till they have destroyed me, and I could have wished that no one might be stained with the guilt of my blood, save the Papists only."* In this spirit he prepared for his departure. The Council of Wittenberg provided his conveyance, the Duke of Weimar furnished the necessary supplies, and at length, with four companions

* "Certissimum habeo eos non quieturos sanguinarios, donec occiderint me; quanquam hoc cupiam, nequi meo sanguine rei fiant, nisi papistæ." —*Epist. Luth.*, No. 302. In a letter to Frederick of the same date he enumerates the articles in question, and argues against the retractation of them.

whose names should always be recorded—Justus Jonas,* a distinguished member of the university of Erfurth; Nicholas Amsdorf, canon of Wittemberg; Peter Schwaben, a Danish nobleman; and Jerome Schurff, professor of canon law at Wittemberg—he set out in the name of God on his journey to Worms.

The principal towns through which his road lay were in commotion as he drew near to them.† The celebrity of the man and the generous and fearful object of his present expedition awakened curiosity or sympathy in every breast. At Erfurth especially he was received with acclamation and attended in numerous procession. Every one was eager to behold the insurgent monk, who stood alone in the face of all Christendom as the antagonist of the pontiff of Rome. Many offered up their ardent vows for his success. There were many too who trembled for him; they were aware how many cardinals and prelates were assembled at Worms; they knew their feelings and their principles; they had read the bloody story of Huss and Jerome, and they predicted a repetition of the same perfidious barbarity. But Luther was undaunted: “Should they light a fire,” he exclaimed, “which should blaze as high as heaven and reach from Wittemberg to Worms, at Worms I will still appear in the name of the Lord, and overthrow the Behemoth.” With the same courage he wrote from Francfort to Spa-

* Strictly speaking, J. Jonas joined him at Erfurth.

† His enemies, being unable to contest this, attempted to throw ridicule on it: “In diversoriis (says Cochlæus) multa propinatio, læta compositio, musices quoque gaudia; adeo ut Lutherus ipse alicubi sonora testudine ludens omnium in se oculos converteret, velut Orpheus quidam, sed rasmus adhuc et cucullatus, eoque mirabilior.” Now Luther himself, writing to Spalatin from Francfort, on April 14, says, “Venimus, etsi non uno morbo me Satan impedire molitus sit.” His sickness during a great portion of this journey is mentioned in other parts of his correspondence. Cochlæus was dean of the church of Notre Dame at Francfort.

latin—"I hear that the Emperor has published a mandate to terrify me. But Christ lives in spite of it, and I will enter Worms, though all the gates of hell and the powers of darkness should oppose me."* And again: "I am determined to overawe Satan and to treat him with scorn."

In this, as in all his other difficulties, his most daring intrepidity was his best wisdom. Had he wavered he had been lost. His enemies saw this; for at this crisis they understood his real situation better than his friends. Accordingly, they left no means untried to divert him, if possible by terror, if not by artifice, from his present resolution. They caused it to be generally believed that his appearance at Worms would be simply the signal for his execution. They produced the imperial edict so lately published against his books as a proof that the Diet had already passed sentence upon him, and was only waiting his arrival to inflict it. These terrors had no weight with Luther himself; yet were they not without influence on some of his most faithful supporters, who fell into the snare which the papists had laid for him.

He had arrived at Oppenheim, within three leagues from Worms, when he received a letter from Spalatin, conjuring him, ere it was too late, to desist from his fatal determination. Francis of Sickingen, an avowed adherent, had even lent himself to a deliberate scheme with the same object. At the same time and place he sent to Luther a common friend, Bucer, to urge the following proposal: That he should abandon his resolution and take refuge in the castle of Ebernburg,† where his person would be in security; and that Glapio should meet him there and confer with him on the subjects in dispute and devise the means of reconciliation.

* "Verum Christus vivit, et intrabimus WORMATIAM INVITIS OMNIBUS PORTIS INFERNI ET POTESTATIBUS AERIS."

† See Chapter xi.

The subtle Franciscan had spread this last device to intercept him in his way, and his arts had prevailed in the quarter, where there was most danger from their success. Luther was unsuspecting; his whole mind was so earnestly fixed on his purpose and engrossed by his principles, as to leave no space for any apprehension. He simply replied: That there now remained only three days of the period allowed by the safe-conduct for his journey to Worms, an interval too short to engage in negotiations with the Emperor's confessor; that he should therefore proceed direct to Worms; and that any who might wish to confer with him would find him there. And it was at this time and in the presence of his trembling friends that he made the remarkable declaration, so commonly cited in all histories: "I am quite fixed and determined to obey the call and enter the city, in the name of Christ; though there were as many devils there as there are tiles on the roofs of the houses I would pass therein." He departed from Oppenheim accordingly, and on the same day, Tuesday the 16th of April, arrived at his destination.

If vanity or ambition were among the motives of Luther, the manner of his reception at Worms was alone reward sufficient for all his toils and anxieties. A twice-condemned, excommunicated heretic, he presented himself for judgment rather than trial before the universal assembly of his countrymen and in the presence of all Christendom—yet his entry was a sort of triumphal procession.* The imperial herald marched before him in his habits of ceremony; around him was a numerous body of Saxon nobles and other gentlemen and courtiers, who had gone forth to meet him; while the streets were crowded by anxious multitudes of a lower rank, who

* Vitus Warbeck, Canon of Altenburg, describes this event in a letter to Duke John, brother of Frederick, dated on the very day.

testified their interest in his cause and their regard for his person by escorting him to his appointed residence. His confidence was redoubled by the spectacle. And as he descended from his carriage and looked round upon that immense concourse, he exclaimed aloud, in a voice as it were inspired by prophetic assurance—"God will be on my side."

His lodging was prepared in the same hotel with the minister of Saxony. And there he was so generally and sedulously sought, by counts and barons, by knights and nobles of every denomination, by priests too as well as seculars, that it was late at night before the feeling subsided and the officious crowd withdrew.

NOTE.

Three names have been mentioned in this chapter, all of which acquired considerable distinction in the progress of the Reformation, and which ought not therefore to be passed without some notice here—Justus Jonas, Nicholas Amsdorf and Martin Bucer.

1. Justus Jonas was born at Nordlingen in 1493. Destined to the profession of the law, he entered on that study at Erfurth, and with so much distinction that in 1519 he was appointed rector of the university. Moved however by the more exciting interest then attaching to theological questions and impelled by a strong inclination towards the evangelical opinions, he changed his design and devoted his talents to the service of religion. He was at Erfurth when Luther arrived there in his journey to Worms. He came forth at the head of a multitude of admirers to welcome the Reformer, and obtained his permission to attend him to the Diet and share his dangers. He then removed to Wittenberg, where he was made (in 1521) Principal of the College of All Saints and Doctor in Divinity. The graceful and forcible eloquence of his pulpit oratory deserved the eulogy of Melancthon;* and his polemical tracts on the Marriage of the Clergy, on Private Masses, on the Unction of Priests, and other disputed questions, did good service to his cause. But it was

* "Pomeranus est grammaticus ; ego sum dialecticus, Jonas est orator. Lutherus vero nobis omnibus antecellit."

at public disputations and conferences that he was chiefly distinguished, both through the knowledge of civil law which he had acquired in his earlier studies, and through the dexterity, also derived from his former profession, with which he unravelled the threads so perpetually involving political with ecclesiastical controversy. And though he never, as we shall observe, took the principal part on those occasions, yet he was always to be found among the combatants, and doubtless frequently influenced by his private counsels the result of the debate. He survived Luther nine years, a faithful disciple to the end of his days, which he concluded in the honourable station of Inspector of Eisfeldt and other reformed churches.*

2. Nicholas Amsdorf was born in Misnia, in the same year with Luther; and having been very early connected with the university of Wittemberg, he was one of the very first who declared his adhesion to the cause and gave his support to the Reformer. It was more especially his zeal for the doctrine of justification by faith which cemented this union, and which carried him to those extreme opinions, to which such dangerous consequences were ascribed by those who opposed them. In one respect Amsdorf was distinguished from all the other "apostles" of the Reformation; he was of noble origin. His fortunes too were somewhat more varied. In 1524 he was sent by Luther to preach the gospel at Magdeburg, and for eighteen years he presided over the churches in that district. Then he was promoted to a higher dignity. On January 20, 1542, in the presence of the Elector, he was ordained Bishop of Naumburg, with imposition of hands by Luther, Spalatin and two other ministers. But the Emperor contested the legitimacy of his appointment, and finally, in 1548, rejected him from the see—when he returned in peace and in mature and respected old age to the bosom of his original converts at Magdeburg.

3. Martin Bucer was born at Selestadt, in Alsace, in 1491. He entered very young into a Dominican monastery, and was soon recommended by the earnestness of his piety to the approbation of his brethren. Thence he was removed to Heidelberg; but there his mind was enlarged and his studies took a course which deceived the hopes of his monastic admirers. The fountain at which he first drank was Erasmus; and the delight with which he repeated those draughts gave evidence of a congenial spirit. He was thus disciplined and familiar with the exercise of some degree of intellectual independence when Luther began to murmur in a louder tone. At first Bucer was somewhat confounded. The violence of the invective, the nakedness of the expressions, the audacity of some of the

* Melchior Adam. Vita J. Jonæ.

positions of the Saxon startled him. But he set about to examine into the truth. He unfolded his Bible; he compared the doctrine of Luther with the obvious sense of Scripture, and he perceived that it was for the most part well founded; then he made his choice, and though he did not adopt Luther's opinion on justification till he had read his book "On the Bondage of the Will," yet he was an avowed advocate of the general principles of the Reformation. The monks immediately rose against the apostate; and he deemed his life so insecure in the midst of their menaces that he fled to the castle of Sickingen. At Worms, whither he attended that nobleman, his enthusiasm was still further warmed by intercourse with Luther; and then he returned to his refuge and continued there, during the crisis which followed, till the death of his protector.

The acts of Bucer are so closely interwoven with the subsequent history of the Reformation, that it would be superfluous to anticipate them in this place.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DIET OF WORMS.

Luther's first appearance before the Diet—he is commanded to retract—obtains another day for consideration—his second appearance—exhortation of George Frondsberg—Luther's speech to the Diet—he acknowledges his books—defends for the most part their contents—excuses his occasional severity—and refuses retraction—delivered in German and Latin—the remonstrances of the imperial orator on the part of the Diet—the effect on the members of the Diet favourable to him—the feelings of the German portion of his audience—other particulars—the Emperor's proposal to the Diet—rejected—private negotiations undertaken by the Archbishop of Treves—the great and general attention shown to Luther—his first conference with the Archbishop—Jerome Vehe—a moderate reformer—conducts the discussion—Luther's firmness—further negotiations—equally fruitless—papal proposal to violate the safe-conduct—repudiated by the princes and the Emperor—remarks on the moderation of Luther's treatment at the Diet—some reasons for it—the conduct of Frederick on this occasion—his letters—the papists procure the publication of an edict against Luther—manner of its publication—substance of the edict—two barbarous remarks of Aleander—the impotence of the edict—and remonstrance of Aleander—the Reformation desired by George of Saxony and others—report of the Committee of the Diet—one hundred and one grievances.

ON the day following, at four in the afternoon, Luther was conducted before the Diet. He was escorted by the imperial master of the horse, Ulrich of Pappenheim; and so vast a multitude collected to see him pass along the streets, that it became necessary to lead him by a circuitous and private route to the hall of audience. Even thus, all the windows and roofs which afforded any

chance of beholding him were crowded with spectators. As he moved towards the hall, and while he was waiting among the nobles there assembled, he was saluted by several pious suggestions of consolation and encouragement : that he should be confident and of good cheer ; that he should not fear those who can destroy the body, but who cannot destroy the soul ; but rather Him who can destroy both soul and body together in Gehennah. When you stand before kings take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak.

At such a moment as this, even those simple admonitions may have fortified his resolution ; not only because they were derived from those sacred writings on which he fixed his only ground of defence, but also because they indicated a similar spirit in his friends, and proved to him that they too placed their reliance where alone it could be placed with safety.

When he appeared before the assembly, the* orator of the Emperor, the official of the Archbishop of Treves, addressed him in a loud voice, first in Latin and then in German : “ Martin Luther—His imperial majesty, by the counsel of the Order of the Roman empire, has summoned you hither, that I may interrogate you respecting two points ; first, whether you acknowledge these books” (pointing to a parcel of books before him), “ which are retailed in your name, to be yours ? next, whether you are disposed to retract their contents or to persist in them ?” Jerome Schurff, Luther’s legal assistant, here exclaimed —“ Let the titles of the books be read !” And among them, besides the polemical publications perhaps more generally known, were enumerated—Commentaries on

* His name, it singularly happened, was John Eck ; but it was not the professor of Ingolstadt.

the Psalter, a book on Good Works, a Commentary on the Lord's Prayer, and other productions of a purely religious tendency. Then Luther replied: That, in respect to the first question, he did undoubtedly acknowledge those books, and would never disclaim any one of them; but that, as to the second, since it involved the salvation of souls and the word of God, and that which was greatest and most venerable in heaven and in earth, he wished his answer to be founded on deeper deliberation, lest he should incur the condemnation pronounced by Christ: Whosoever denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven. He therefore entreated that some further space for consideration might be granted him, that he might so frame his answer as neither to offend the word of God nor to endanger his own soul.

To this request the official was instructed to reply: "Although you, Martin Luther, might have sufficiently understood from the imperial summons for what purpose who were called hither, and are therefore undeserving of any longer indulgence, still, through the inborn clemency of the Emperor, one day is granted to you, on condition that your answer to-morrow shall not be written, but entirely by word of mouth." There was some justice in this reproach; nor was it probable that Luther would be at all better qualified to reply to a demand for which he had been so long prepared on the morrow than at that moment. It may have been that he thought to pay a due respect to that august tribunal by the show of hesitation; or his courage may really have faltered in the presence of so many of the potentates of this world. His enemies at least put this last interpretation on his conduct. Their hopes, which had been disappointed by his appearance at Worms, began somewhat to revive; and even the most confident of his friends were not

without anxiety respecting the proceedings of the morrow.

He presented himself at the appointed time, and on this occasion he was detained for two hours in the hall of attendance, in the midst of a large assemblage. During this interval he was addressed by one George Frondsberg, a soldier and nobleman of high consideration, in words of sympathy, yet perhaps as calculated to dishearten as to confirm: "My poor monk!* my poor monk! thou art marching to a position the like of which I and my brother officers have never taken in our severest conflicts. Nevertheless, if right be on thy side, and if thou be well assured that it is so, forwards in the name of God, and be of good courage—God will not forsake thee." When the previous business was transacted Luther was again called before the Diet, and again addressed by the imperial orator; who, after some sarcastic remarks upon his petition for delay, as unworthy of so great a doctor and so practised a disputant, proceeded to repeat his former interrogations.

Luther turned towards the Emperor, and with a serious countenance, wherein modesty was decorously blended with firmness, he spoke, in the German language, to the following effect: "In obedience to your command, most serene imperial majesty and most illustrious princes, I stand here, beseeching you, as God is merciful, so to deign mercifully to listen to this cause, which is, as I believe, the cause of justice and of truth. And if through inexperience I should fail to apply to

* "Münchlein, Münchlein, du gehest jetzt einen gang, einen solchen stand zu thun, dergleichen ich und mancher obeister, auch in unsrer aller-ernstesten schlachtordnung nicht gethan haben. Bist tu auf rechter meinung, und deiner sachen gewiss, so fahre in Gotte's namen fort, und sey nur getrost, Gott wird dich nicht verlassen." Apud Seckendorf. lib. i. § 9.

any one his proper title, or offend in any way against the manners of courts, I entreat you to pardon me, as one not conversant with courts but with the cells of monks, and claiming no other merit than that of having lectured and written with that simplicity of mind, which regards nothing but the glory of God and the pure instruction of the people of Christ.

“Two articles have been proposed to me: Whether I acknowledge the books which are published in my name? and whether I am determined to defend or disposed to recal them? To the first of these I have given a direct answer, in which I shall ever persist, that those books are mine and published by me, except so far as they may have been altered or interpolated by the craft or officiousness of rivals. To the other I am now about to reply; and I must first entreat your majesty and your highnesses to deign to consider that my books are not all of the same description. For there are some in which I have treated the piety of faith and morals with simplicity so evangelical, that my very adversaries confess them to be profitable and harmless and deserving the perusal of a Christian. Even the Pope’s bull, fierce and cruel as it is,* admits some of my books to be innocent, though even these, with a monstrous perversity of judgment, it includes in the same sentence. If then I should think of retracting these, should I not stand alone in my condemnation of that truth which is acknowledged by the unanimous confession of all, whether friends or foes?

“The second species of my publications is that in which I have inveighed against the papacy and the doctrine of the papists, as of men who by their iniquitous tenets and examples have desolated the Christian world

* “Sed bulla, quamquam sæva et crudelis, aliquot meos libros, &c. . .”

both with spiritual and temporal calamities. No man can deny or dissemble this. The sufferings and complaints of all mankind are my witnesses, that through the laws of the Pope and the doctrines of men the consciences of the faithful have been ensnared, tortured and torn in pieces, while at the same time their property and substance have been devoured by an incredible tyranny, and are still devoured without end and by degrading means, and that too most of all in this noble nation of Germany. Yet it is with them a perpetual statute, that the laws and doctrines of the Pope be held erroneous and reprobate, when they are contrary to the gospel and the opinions of the fathers.*

“If then I shall retract these books, I shall do no other than add strength to tyranny and throw open doors to this great impiety, which will then stride forth more widely and licentiously than it has dared hitherto; so that the reign of iniquity will proceed with entire impunity, and, notwithstanding its intolerable oppression upon the suffering vulgar, be still further fortified and established; especially when it shall be proclaimed that I have been driven to this act by the authority of your serene majesty and the whole Roman empire. What a cloak, blessed Lord, should I then become for wickedness and despotism!

“In a third description of my writings are those which I have published against individuals, against the defenders of the Roman tyranny and the subverters of the

* “*Nam neque negare id, neque dissimulare quidquam potest, cum experientia omnium et universorum querimonia testes sint, per leges papæ et doctrinas hominum conscientias fidelium miserrime esse illaqueatas, vexatas, et excarnificatas; tum res et substantias, præsertim in hac inclyta Germaniæ natione, incredibili tyrannide devoratas, devorarique adhuc sine fine, indignisque modis. Cum tamen suismet legibus ipsi caveant, ut papæ leges et doctrinæ, evangelico et patrum sentiis contrariæ, pro erroneis et reprobis habeantur.*”—Acta D. M. Lutheri, &c.

piety taught by me. Against these I do freely confess that I have written with more bitterness than was becoming either my religion or my profession; for indeed I lay no claim to any especial sanctity, and argue not respecting my own life, but respecting the doctrine of Christ. Yet even these writings it is impossible for me to retract, seeing that through such retraction despotism and impiety would reign under my patronage, and rage with more than their former ferocity against the people of God.

“Yet since I am but man and not God, it would not become me to go farther in defence of my tracts than my Lord Jesus went in defence of his doctrine; who, when he was interrogated before Annas and received a blow from one of the officers, answered, ‘If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?’ If then the Lord himself, who knew his own infallibility, did not disdain to require arguments against his doctrine even from a person of low condition, how much rather ought I, who am the dregs of earth and the very slave of error, to inquire and search if there be any to bear witness against my doctrine! Wherefore I intreat you, by the mercy of God, that if there be any one of any condition who has that ability, let him advance his testimony, let him confute my errors, let him overpower me by the sacred writings, prophetic and evangelical. And for my own part, as soon as I shall be better instructed, I will retract my errors and be the first to cast my books into the flames.

“It must now, I think, be manifest that I have sufficiently examined and weighed not only the dangers but the parties and dissensions excited in the world by means of my doctrine, of which I was yesterday so gravely admonished. But I must avow that to me it is of all others the most delightful spectacle to see parties and dissen-

sions growing up on account of the word of God, for such is the progress of God's word, such its end and object. 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household.'*

"Moreover we should reflect that our God is wonderful and terrible in his counsels; so that this work, which is now the object of so much solicitude, if we should find it in the condemnation of the word of God, may be turned by his providence into a deluge of intolerable calamity; and the reign of this young and excellent prince (in whom is our hope after God) may have an unhappy and inauspicious beginning.

"I could show more abundantly by reference to scriptural examples—to those of Pharaoh, the king of Babylon, the kings of Israel—that they have brought about their own destruction by those very counsels of worldly wisdom which seemed to promise them peace and stability. For it is He who taketh the wise in their craftiness and removeth the mountains and they know not, and overturneth them in his anger. So that it is the work of God to fear God. Yet I say not these things as if the great personages here present stood at all in need of my admonitions, but only because it was a service which I owed to my native Germany, and it was my duty to discharge it. And thus I commend myself to your serene majesty and all the princes, humbly beseeching you not to allow the malice of my enemies to render me odious to you without a cause. I have done."

* Matt. x. 34, &c. Milner, professing to give Luther's speech entire, appears to have overlooked this scriptural reference.

Having delivered this address in German, Luther was commanded to recite it in Latin.* For a moment he hesitated; his breath was exhausted, and he was oppressed by the heat and throng of the surrounding multitude. One of the Saxon courtiers even advised him to excuse himself from obedience; but he presently collected his powers again, and repeated his speech with few variations and equal animation in the other language. His tone was that of supplication rather than remonstrance, and there was something of diffidence in his manner; yet was this so tempered by Christian boldness and constancy, that his adversaries would have been better pleased had he shown a still humbler spirit: there were even some among them who had come prepared to hear his recantation, and these were most of all disappointed. His friends resumed their courage, grew in admiration of his character, and not least so he, on whose good opinion the fate of the Reformer most especially depended. The Elector of Saxony was present, and soon after the dissolution of the meeting, in a private interview with Spalatin, he expressed his astonishment and delight at the eloquence and animation of his professor.*

No sooner had he ceased than the orator reminded him in a tone of reproach, that they were not assembled to discuss matters which had long ago been decided by councils, but that a simple answer was required of him to a simple question—whether he would retract or not?

* “Oh! quam bene Pater Martinus Germanice et Latine coram Cæsare et ordinibus locutus est! Satis aut nimium animosus fuit. . . .” The “nimium” was in the timidity of Frederick. Pallavicini admits that the dignity of his manner produced a deep sensation, “which some ascribed to a divine influence residing within him, others to the operation of some evil spirit.” Charles remarked, “Der Mönch redet unerschrocken, mit getrostem muth.”

Then Luther: "Since your most serene majesty and the princes require a simple answer I will give it thus: unless I shall be convinced by proofs from Scripture or by evident reason, (for I believe neither in popes nor in councils, since they have frequently both erred and contradicted themselves,) I cannot choose but adhere to the word of God, which has possession of my conscience; nor can I possibly, nor will I ever make any recantation, since it is neither safe nor honest to act contrary to conscience. Here I take my stand; I cannot do otherwise: God be my help! Amen."*

After the diet had deliberated on the speech of Luther, the orator again addressed him in the following terms: "You have spoken with less modesty, Martin Luther, than was becoming one in your condition. The division which you made of your books is not at all to the purpose; for if you had retracted those in which the mass of your errors is contained, the imperial clemency would without doubt have prevented the persecution of those which are good. But you revive opinions which the general council of Constance, composed of deputies from the entire German nation, has condemned, and then you require to be convinced by arguments from Scripture. This is raving. For if a new disputation is to be raised respecting matters long ago decided by the church, then every man may demand a reason for every tenet. And if this principle shall be once established, that every one who may dispute the interpretations of the councils and the church is to be convinced by Scripture, we shall have nothing certain or determined in the Christian faith. For this reason his imperial majesty demands of you a plain and simple answer, negative or affirmative. Will you maintain all that you have advanced as Catholic, or will you retract any part of it?"

* "Hie stehe ich. Ich kan nicht anders; Gott helff mir! Amen."
—Acta D. M. Lutheri Wormatiæ habita.

To this perfectly reasonable appeal Luther replied: That his conscience, being bound captive by the Scriptures, allowed him not to make any other answer than that already made. Besides, that opinions were not necessarily true, because they had been established by councils; that he was prepared to prove that councils had erred; but that he could never retract what was manifestly expressed in Scripture. To this the Official made no other reply than a brief assertion, that no council could be convicted of error. This was confidently contradicted by Luther; and, as it was now dark, the assembly rose, and retired every one to his own residence. Luther retired likewise; and on his departure from the Hall of Audience, he was pursued by the loud and long-continued groans and hisses of the Spanish faction.*

Yet the general effect produced on the Diet both by his address and his demeanour was unquestionably favourable. It was a great part of his wisdom and a principal cause of his success, that he scorned any attempt by any compromise of principle to conciliate his avowed enemies. And thus we observe, that even here, in the presence of so many powerful ecclesiastics who were thirsting for his blood, he feared not to denounce in his customary language the iniquities of the Roman church. By this decided conduct he neither increased the number of his persecutors, nor embittered (for that was not possible) their animosity; but he gave them cause to fear him—and fear is the only argument that has any weight with established injustice. And what was even more—he thus inspired his own confidence into the bosoms of friends; he animated the zealous, he confirmed the wavering, and he won that large class of persons, who

* “Discedentem a Cæsarea majestate et tribunali Hispanorum bona pars ronchis et subsannatione hominem Dei Lutherum longo rugitu persecuti sunt.” Act. D. M. Lutheri Worm. habita, &c.

desire to be right; yet being incompetent to form any correct opinions for themselves on important questions whether in church or state, are guided for the most part by appearances; when they see courage they mistake it for strength, and strength they deem the surest proof of justice.

Again: the speech of Luther was addressed to an audience chiefly German; and the allusions which it contained to the national dignity, and to the national insults and depredations inflicted by Rome, were not lost either on the more independent, or on the more interested members of the assembly. The papal imposts had long been the detested object of fierce but vain remonstrance. The general reformation of the church had been frequently demanded and attempted in vain. The wealth and pride and vices of the clergy, which were pre-eminently conspicuous in Germany, had long excited the envy, or perhaps the avarice, of the princes, certainly the indignation of the people. Other ecclesiastical abuses were everywhere manifest, which, though many endured them, found few zealous defenders, except among those to whom they were professionally dear, or personally profitable. For the correction of these evils it was too late to look to Rome. The experience of the last hundred and twenty years had taught the intelligent that the church was too deeply corrupted to reform itself. Any such project must have proceeded from the hierarchy; and it was now evident to every man, that the higher the rank of the ecclesiastics, the more closely they clung to all the great iniquities of their system. The only hope then was from without; and the impulse, which the writings of Luther had communicated to the popular mind, seemed to point out him as the providential instrument. And this was a strong incentive, even with many who were not his adherents, for preserving him from destruction.

Others were, the severity of his treatment, the propriety of his demeanour, the purity of his moral character. It was obvious to all who saw and heard him, that his motives were simply those which he professed—an ardent love for the word of God and a fixed resolution to uphold what he earnestly believed to be the truth. No one now questioned, that he was above the influence of vulgar incentives, that neither envy, nor avarice, nor ambition, was the spring of his actions. This persuasion would create among many a prejudice in favour of his doctrine; and among all, except his decided foes, a disposition to protect his person. Thus the proceedings of this important day did realise to a great extent the apprehensions of the papal party, and fixed a considerable number of the members of the Diet in the interests, if not in the principles, of the Reformer.

This appeared immediately. On the following day the Emperor, in whose councils the policy of the Vatican was then predominant, presented for approbation to the Diet an edict directly hostile to Luther: “Our ancestors, though Christian princes, were ever obedient to the Roman church, which Martin Luther now assails. And since he is resolved not to depart a hair’s-breadth from his errors, we cannot with honour forsake the example of our forefathers, in defending the ancient faith and assisting the See of Rome. For which reason we shall execute the excommunication against Luther and his adherents, and employ all other means in our power—our kingdom, treasures, friends, life, body and soul,—for their destruction. Yet will we dismiss him in safety on condition of his peaceable conduct, and protect him on his return to the place whence he was summoned.” This proposal met with much resistance in the Diet. It was debated during that and the whole of the succeeding day, and appears to have been finally

rejected. At least it was resolved that, before proceeding to that extremity, a milder expedient should be tried; that private negotiations should be commenced with a view to bring about a partial retraction. The conduct of this attempt was committed to the Archbishop of Treves, who was remarkable for that moderation of temper, which sometimes softens the operation of the most intolerant principles.

In the mean time Luther was continually receiving the visits of numbers of persons of every rank, of whom some indeed might be led by curiosity, but the greater part was doubtless attached to his interests, and none could be accounted among his enemies; as on the evening of his arrival, princes,* knights and nobles, with a great concourse of the vulgar, and even some ecclesiastics, were constantly in attendance at his levee, and were never satiated with gazing on him. So that the court of this anathematised monk was more splendid, and resounded with homage louder and incomparably more sincere, than that of the most powerful sovereigns. But all this respect and deference, from persons so exalted in worldly condition to one so humble, which would have overthrown the equanimity of a vain or selfish man, did not elate or in any way discompose the soul of Luther. Because he perceived that this reverence was not in fact offered to himself but to the cause which he defended. He knew and felt that Luther was but the watchword for the rallying of all that was holy and generous in Chris-

* Amongst the princes were William Duke of Brunswick, William Prince of Hesseberg and Philip Landgrave of Hesse. Some incidents are related respecting the first interview between Luther and the last of these, which acquire an interest from the very distinguished part afterwards taken by the Landgrave in support of the Reformation. Had Luther not appeared at Worms and there become personally known to Philip, the latter might never have taken so deep an interest in his cause.

tendom against superstition and tyranny—or, at the best, that he was no more than a weak and worthless instrument in the hands of Omnipotence, for the accomplishment of It's unerring purposes. Thus the exultation, with which he doubtless surveyed the power and number of his courtiers, being unmingled with any personal considerations, served but to elevate his spirit and confirm his confidence. From the beginning he had been earnest in his conviction that his cause was the cause of God; and in his past successes and in his present honours he saw nothing but the hand of God, extending to it His sanction and encouragement; and he felt more and more assured that, whatever fate might befall his person, his doctrine and his principles would irresistibly and eternally prevail.

On the 24th of April, a week after his first appearance before the Diet, he received a summons to present himself to the Archbishop of Treves. He went, attended by several of his friends, and found the prelate surrounded by a large body of ecclesiastical and secular dignitaries. The officer, authorised to expound the views of this committee, was Jerome Vehe (Væus), chancellor of Baden, one of the ablest lawyers and most accomplished scholars in Germany. He was not a Lutheran; indeed he was an active and eloquent opponent of Luther. Yet was he equally far from adopting the extreme principles of the Roman party. He condemned, on the one hand, the abuse of indulgences and excommunication; he was anxious for a reformation in the morals, in the discipline, and even in the doctrine of the church; he admitted that the word of God was suffocated under man's corruptions; yet, on the other, he supported auricular confession, the sacrifice of the mass, and the ancient ceremonies which had been so rudely assailed.* He was one,

* There is extant a letter from Vehe to George of Saxony, written

in short, of that moderate and well-intentioned party, which loved the church too wisely, not to detest its most dangerous disorders; which would have purified it to a certain extent, could this have been effected by constitutional means—a party which, while it urged the princes of Christendom to extinguish the popular reformation of Luther, urged them, in the same breath and with no less importunity, to convoke a general council for the very purpose of reformation. It was not that they wished altogether to evade the question; but they dreaded the impulse from without. They did not perceive the extent and depth of the evil, and they still clung perhaps to the fond hope, that the hierarchy would at length lend its voluntary aid to abolish some portion at least of the iniquities by which it flourished.

Vehe addressed Luther with force and eloquence. He represented to him: That some human laws and establishments were necessary for the support of religion; that there must be somewhere an authority for the interpretation of Scripture and the discerning of error; that such power, being vested in general councils, ought not to be extinguished, even though it could be shown that a council had erred; that we were no longer in those blessed ages when piety arose spontaneously in the heart, and that outward forms and rites were now necessary to nourish it; that some of the principles contained in his Treatise on Christian Liberty had already been perverted by the vulgar; that many deadly evils were about to arise in the world through the diffusion of his

about this time, in which, after mentioning his differences with Luther, he deplored the actual condition of the church: "*Miserum ecclesiæ statum et tempora, in quibus refriguit charitas, tepuit devotio, voluptatum spinæ in comessionibus et ebrietatibus ita excrevere, ut verbum Dei quasi suffocatum, ne dicam pessumdatum est . . .*" Seckend. l. i. § 96. Addit. ii.

doctrines; and that the Emperor was prepared to enforce the sentence of condemnation, unless he should now yield.

In opposition to the principles of the chancellor, which were in fact the established reason and wisdom of that age, Luther adhered, with many expressions of respect but with perfect firmness, to his own: That, being amenable to a higher tribunal, he could never retract opinions which he sincerely believed to be the truth of God. It was then inquired, whether he would submit his works to the decision of the Emperor and the States? To this he consented; but still on the express condition that they should be tried by no other test than that of Scripture: "For the word of God to me" (he continued) "is so clear, that I cannot yield, unless I shall be convinced from the word of God itself of the error of my interpretation." The princes then retired, and a more private conference took place, respecting the authority of Scripture, the determination of controversies, and the nature of the church, between Luther, Schurff, and Amsdorf, on the one hand, and the Archbishop, his official, John Eck, and Cochläus, Dean of Francfort, the historian of the Reformation, on the other; but it had no result. The right of private interpretation of Scripture, which was expressly asserted by Luther, was too manifestly in opposition to the most essential element in the constitution of the Roman Catholic church.

On the following day these conferences were resumed. Luther was earnestly counselled, exhorted, entreated, to submit his publications without any reserve to the judgment of the Emperor and the empire—or, at least, to that of a future council-general. But he persisted in guarding his consent by his former condition—that the sentence of his judges should be founded on the clear and obvious interpretation of the word of God. A pri-

vate interview with the Archbishop concluded these fruitless negotiations; and in this, won by that prelate's considerate kindness, Luther disclosed another reason for his perseverance—that the tribunal to which he was required to submit would be necessarily composed of his enemies—of men who had already condemned him, who approved of the Pope's bull, and with whom even the public faith was not sacred. “Then,” replied the Archbishop, “suggest some means by which this affair may be terminated.” “I can suggest none,” rejoined Luther, “except the counsel of Gamaliel, as recorded by St. Luke :* ‘Refrain from these men and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight even against God.’ And thus much may the Emperor communicate to the Pope with perfect confidence, that, if the enterprise of Luther be not of God, within the space of three, or even of two years, it will fall to pieces of itself; but, if it be of God, man will have no power to quench it.”† After a few words more this conversation ended, and Luther applied for his safe-conduct to return whence he had been summoned.

There now remained one only hope for the papal party—to procure the violation of the safe-conduct, and to re-enact the tragedy perpetrated by their forefathers at Constance, with the same aggravation of deliberate treachery. Whether the question was publicly proposed in open Diet may be doubtful; but the dispositions of the members were sounded, and the matter was undoubtedly discussed in a conference. It was argued: That no

* Acts Apost., v. 38, 39.

† “Ist meine sache nicht aus Gott, so wird sie über zwey oder drey yahr nicht wähen; ist sie aber aus Gott, so wird sie man nicht dämpffen können.”

such favourable occasion would again arise to extinguish the heresy; that the example of Constance was before all men; that the offences of Luther were incomparably more heinous than those of Huss; that the principle of perfidy, established and consecrated at Constance, remained still unrepealed, and almost uncensured, among the eternal statutes of the Roman church.

These abominable suggestions were overthrown by the spirit of national honour, if not of Christian piety, which animated the mass of the assembly. Lewis, Elector Palatine, exclaimed with indignation: "It is intolerable that the public faith, in which the honour, not of the Emperor only, but of the whole empire is involved, should be violated, and the German name covered with everlasting disgrace."* Even George of Saxony, than whom no secular prince was more hostile to the cause of Luther, remonstrated to the same effect: "The German princes will never permit, especially on the first Diet of the Emperor, so great a scandal, as the breach of a safe-conduct. It is a maxim of our old German loyalty—what one has promised that must one keep." And it was on this occasion that Charles is related to have pronounced that memorable sentiment: "If good faith were banished from the whole earth, it ought still to find refuge in the courts of kings."† Thus it proved, through God's good providence, that the papists were most signally defeated in their most detestable design. Luther received his safe-conduct: "All has passed," he cried, "according to the will of God; blessed be the name of the Lord!" And thus escaping from the last of many snares, and perhaps unconscious how many had surrounded him, he immediately set forth on the 26th of April, on his journey to Wittenberg.

* Altingius apud Seckend. l. i. § 99, Add. i.

† "In aulis principum refugium illi deberi." Ibidem.

Luther could not justly complain of any severity at the hands of the Diet. Indeed it seems at first sight strange that he was treated so leniently. When we reflect how great the number, the fury, the power and the wickedness of his adversaries ; that their principles were the established principles of the age, transmitted from a sacred antiquity, and hitherto feebly and unsuccessfully disputed ; while that on which alone he rested, the private right of interpreting Scripture, though doubtless captivating and popular, was entirely new, directly opposed to the very existence of the church, and even liable to some reasonable objections ; when we consider that he was already condemned and excommunicated ; that among all the princes present he had not so much as one avowed protector, nor even a single advocate of any rank or influence in the assembly—we cannot withhold our surprise that he should have been permitted to address that body at so great length and with so much boldness, without interruption, and almost without reproof ; that, after he had publicly refused obedience, so many efforts should have been made by persons of high consequence, by private remonstrance, argument and entreaty, to induce him to retract—to retract, if not the whole, at least a part of his writings ; or, if that were impossible, at least to submit them to the judgment, no longer of the Pope, the infallible and constitutional judge of controversies, but of a general council, or even of the states of the empire. All these overtures were so many concessions of principle on the part of his adversaries ; yet he rejected them as soon as they were proposed, as no better than lures to draw him down from his high position, and to seduce him step by step through irresolution to destruction. And lastly, after repudiating every offer of compromise and closing the gates of conciliation, he was permitted to depart, not only in safety, but

without any formal expression of displeasure on the part either of the Emperor or of the Diet, and that within little more than a century after the execution of Huss by a council in Germany, composed in part of Germans, and under the eye of a German Emperor.

That the great assembly of the empire, though thronged with dignified ecclesiastics,* was not properly an ecclesiastical assembly; that literature, and civilization and humanity, with sounder notions of justice, and broader principles of morality, had made great progress during the 15th age; that the cause of Luther had obtained many secret and some avowed advocates among the German nobility,† and excited much formidable zeal among the lower classes; these reasons will in a great measure account for the moderation of the Diet of Worms. But even these might not have produced that effect, had not the private influence of Frederick been exerted to counteract the efforts of the pure papists; for in them no sort of alteration had been wrought by the lapse of time and the advance of society. They were the same in every passion and in every principle—the same in

* The Diet consisted of the Emperor and his brother, the Archduke Ferdinand; six electors, twenty-four dukes, eight margraves, thirty archbishops and other prelates, the Pope's nuncios, seven ambassadors, the deputies of ten imperial cities, besides many petty sovereigns, princes, counts, and barons—the whole amounting to two hundred and four persons.

† Pallavicini asserts that a league of more than four hundred nobles was already formed in favour of Luther—that Sickingen was ready with his horsemen, &c. . . Without believing in the existence of so large a confederacy, I do not question that any attempt upon the person of Luther would have been resisted and resented by many military enthusiasts, not Lutherans so much as anti-papists, who were then at Worms. The feeling, where it existed, was at least as violent on that side as on the other. The historian designates Luther's party at that time as composed of a "multitude of poor nobles, grammarians, lawyers, inferior ecclesiastics, and a numerous faction of monks."

virulence, in policy, in perfidy, with their venerated forefathers of Constance.

But Frederick proceeded on this occasion with the same union of firmness with discretion, which characterised his conduct throughout the whole affair. Secretly resolved not to abandon his subject to the fury of his enemies, he was the more careful to avoid any appearance of partiality towards him. During his residence at Worms he never saw him in private, nor held any sort of intercourse with him. But he was not an indifferent observer. This is proved by his private negotiation, already mentioned, for securing the sanctity of the safe-conduct, and also by letters addressed to his brother John during this period.

On the 16th of April* he wrote: "I know not yet whether Luther will come; the proscriptions against him (those against his books) are promulgated; the cardinals and bishops are struggling against him with all their might. May God turn all to good! I would that I could do him any service, at the same time just and profitable to him: I would leave nothing undone."

"If it were in my power," again he said on the 23rd of April, "I would assist Luther in everything that he can reasonably require. But I assure you, I have to sustain such strong solicitations, and those too from persons of such a character, that you would be astonished were I to relate them to you. The main object among them is to drive him into banishment. Whoever appears at all to wish him well, is called a heretic. May God order all things for good; doubtless he will not forsake the just cause!" Again, on the 5th of May, he wrote to this effect: "Luther's cause is reduced to this ques-

* There are some early communications on the same subject, but of less importance, respectively dated Jan. 16, Jan. 30, March 25.

tion; whether he shall be sent into banishment, or not? There is no remedy against these things. The event however is in the hands of God; and when I shall come to you, I shall have astonishing things to tell you. It is the work of God, not of man. And I wish you to know that not only Annas and Caiaphas but also Pilate and Herod are the enemies of Luther." In the mean time, while that pious prince was placing his entire trust where alone he could never be deceived, he was not neglecting (as we shall presently see) to further the designs of Providence by such precautionary measures as mere human foresight might suggest to him.

The departure of Luther did not damp the perseverance of his enemies, nor alter the character of their measures. Their object continued what it had always been, to range the states of the empire on the side of the Pope, and to procure an imperial edict, with the sanction of the Diet, for the forcible execution of the bull of excommunication. Yet they despaired of accomplishing this, so long as all the members remained in attendance at Worms. But during the early part of May many, wearied with the protracted deliberations, and expecting no further measures of importance, retired to their principalities. On the 23rd the Elector of Saxony, though not officially informed, yet not equally in darkness as to the steps in contemplation, departed likewise. Meanwhile, secret cabals had been conducted with the countenance of the Emperor, and private meetings held by those devoted to the papal interests; and at length the celebrated declaration, the fruit of so much industrious intrigue, was promulgated. The Edict of Worms was published on the 26th of May;* but to give it an au-

* The same is the date affixed to all the authorised edicts and acts of the Diet, as published in the volume of the "Recessus Imperii." But

thority, which it did not possess, by persuading the world that it was the act of all the states assembled in full Diet, its fabricators had recourse to one of those expedients which mark a weak as well as a wicked cause—they antedated it on the 8th; and by that poor device they thought to invest it with a spurious authority such as would silence the voice of reason, of justice and of faith, and crush not only the person of their enemy, but all those holy emotions and popular doctrines, which were now diffused through so large a part of the Christian world.

It was an edict of proscription against Luther and his adherents. Under the heaviest penalties, all faithful Christians and subjects were commanded to seize the heretic, together with all who in any way favoured him, and to deliver them up to the authorities. He was denounced in the most violent expressions; he was a demon under the form of man; he was Satan who had assumed the cowl of a monk, as his disguise for the desolation of the human race. His works were from the same pandemonium with their author; in them, raked together in a single mass of filth, were to be found all the most damnable and foetid heresies of former offenders, mixed with some inventions of his own wickedness; they breathed nothing but seditions, wars, discords, conflagrations, carnage, and rapine. Then came his doctrinal

neither this edict, nor indeed anything relating in any way to Luther appears among them; which is curious, as the suppression of “the new and dangerous opinions” was mentioned in the public document as one of the objects in convoking the Diet. The edict professes to be issued—*communi principum et Ordinum consilio*—and may indeed have been composed at the time of its date. That it was not published then is certain. In a letter from the Elector Frederick to his brother, of May 23, wherein is mention of Luther, the publication of any edict against him is not alluded to. The secret of the antedating we owe, says Seckendorf, to Pallavicini.

errors respecting the Seven Sacraments, the Holy Saints, the Eucharist, Confession, the priestly office and order, the See of Rome, mass, fasts and prayers, fathers and councils, and they were all set forth with studious aggravation. Then the expedients which had been attempted for his correction were enumerated: the moderation of the Pontiff, the undeserved and even culpable indulgence of the Diet, the clemency of the Emperor, were contrasted with his own unyielding, contumacious pertinacity; and by such violent representations as these it was intended to justify in the eyes of the German people the destruction of the man whom they loved.

Aleander, there is little question, was the author of this document; and in respect to the evils which he predicted to the German nation from the prevalence of the principles of Luther, two sayings are recorded of him, which not only illustrate his meaning, but also manifest his character, and prove that he was capable of himself inflicting the calamities which he affected to deprecate. "If you Germans," he said at an earlier period, "who of all Christian nations make the poorest contributions to the court of Rome, shall shake off the yoke of the Pope, we on our parts will carefully provide that you shall perish in your own blood, shed by each others' hands." * And when the labours of the Diet were at last at an end, he addressed to his colleague Caraccioli the following words, as a sort of commentary on their first disappointments and their final success:—"Well, Caraccioli! if we have effected nothing very splendid at this Diet, yet is it certain that by this edict we have

* Luther quoted this speech to Link, on the authority of Spalatin, before he went to Worms:—"Etiamsi vos Germani, qui minimum omnium dependitis æris Romano Pontifici, jugum servitutis Romanæ excusseritis; tamen curabimus, ut mutuis cædibus absumpti vestro cruore pereatis."

turned the whole country into one great slaughter-house, in which the Germans raging against their own entrails will be speedily suffocated in their own blood !”*

Such was the confidential agent and ambassador of the vicegerent of Christ ! It was thus that the spirit of the church was represented ! This was the organ of the ecclesiastical faction, the director of their councils, the mirror of their principles and their feelings ! Their thirst, their passion was for blood—for the blood of Luther and all his adherents, could Satan have procured for them so rich a boon. But if that were withheld—if Providence were too watchful—if the German people were too humane, too just, too religious, to permit them that first indulgence—they could still find their consolation, they could still taste a secondary satisfaction, in the blood of the people which refused it. It was well indeed that they had closed the Word of God, and rejected the appeals that were made to it. The outrage had been still more atrocious, had they so much as professed their adherence to the law of Christ.

It appears, however, even from the brutal exultation of Aleander, that he knew the real position of both parties tolerably well. He had passed his edict, but he did not expect its easy execution. He considered it rather as a brand that he had thrown among an insubordinate people, and his prophetic denunciations of dissension and disaster were indeed in after times abundantly accomplished ; but for the moment it fell harmless to the ground. As soon as the transient consternation that it occasioned in the minds of some of the absent members of the Diet, and of all just and moderate spectators, had subsided, it remained absolutely without effect. Luther himself continued unmolested, nor was

* Vonderhardt, Hist. Reform., lib. v. p. 37.

any official inquiry instituted even as to the place of his residence; and his adherents, who were numerous and undisguised, not only at Wittemberg but in many of the principal cities of the empire, were undisturbed by any form of persecution. And thus it proved that the two grand objects to which his enemies attached so much importance, which they at length accomplished by such severe exertions, and accounted as two mighty triumphs—namely, the publication first of the pontifical bull, and next of the imperial edict—did not advance in the slightest degree even their immediate advantage. But the mischief which resulted from their failure was irretrievable; for it was now made manifest to all men that a papal bull was in itself a worthless instrument, unless it were founded on some plea of reason or some principle of justice, and that, even when supported by the highest secular authority, it was still of very doubtful efficacy if opposed to the general feeling of the people.

In this case, however, whatever may have been the power of Charles, it is probable that he had not the leisure—it is possible that he had not the inclination—to enforce his own edict. In his meditated enterprise against Francis I., which doubtless occupied his ambitious spirit more than the speculations of Luther, no object was more important to him than the alliance of the Pope; and this he could not hope to secure unless he lent at least the show of assistance to the papal designs. Among the foremost of these was the extinction of the Lutheran heresy, and the edict was the instrument which was clamorously demanded by the agents of Rome. That price he paid for the friendship of the Vatican; and having sent forth his proclamation among the German people he withdrew to other provinces and other projects, and left it to such reception as the national feeling might be disposed to offer it.

In his absence the legal administration of the government devolved by right on the Elector Palatine and the Elector of Saxony, and their influence was assuredly not exerted in favour of the edict; and thus it is with no surprise that we observe Aleander so soon after presenting, by his master's instruction, an urgent remonstrance to the Emperor, "That almost in his presence, and before the ink was dry, the Lutherans had treated his solemn edict with absolute contempt; and that there was cause for apprehension lest this celebrated proclamation should produce no other consequences than to give the innovators ground for their boast that they had now cast ridicule on the Emperor as well as on the Pope."

It is mentioned in the preceding chapter that a remonstrance against the manifold abuses of Rome was presented by the Diet to the Emperor, and that a committee was appointed to report on the subject. It may appear singular that the prince most distinguished in urging that remonstrance was George of Saxony, since there was not one in the whole assembly more passionately opposed to Luther and his cause than he; yet was he deeply sensible of the practical grievances which the German nation suffered at the hands of Rome, and offended by the general relaxation of discipline. He desired a reform in the externals of the church. He reiterated the old and long-despised complaints respecting annates and commendams, stations and expectative graces, &c. &c., the various denunciations of simony, the scandals of the monks and the clergy—in all these matters he would have proceeded with little mercy to the abuses, and little reverence for any authority which might protect them; but here was his limit. All within was sacred; all the doctrines of the church were pure and inviolable, and it was heresy to invade that sanctuary. He did not perceive that the iniquities which he detected were for the

most part inseparably connected with some of those consecrated tenets, and that the former could never be uprooted so long as the latter were spared. With this narrow view he considered everything beyond its boundaries as dark and dangerous. He preferred the continuance of the existing wrongs to the only effectual remedy; and to the end of his life he defended the system, of which he had denounced the vices and demanded the regeneration, against the only hand which had shown any capability of producing the results he professed to desire.

The committee, consisting in part of ecclesiastics, composed a formidable list of one hundred and one grievances, and presented it to the Emperor. They were compiled on the principle of George of Saxony and the other secular reformers. In addition to the abuses above enumerated, they added the avarice and despotism of the Pope, the usurpation of the temporal jurisdiction by the clergy, the abuse of indulgences, the intrusion of foreign and ignorant incumbents into the most valuable benefices, &c. &c. Multitudes thirsted for this description of reformation; and amongst them, through God's providence, were many bold and earnest spirits who perceived that the time for soft words and conciliatory compromises was gone by, and that the surest method of effecting any great purpose was to rally with unanimous resolution round the standard of Luther.

CHAPTER XV.

LUTHER AT WARTBURG.

Departure of Luther—his letters to the Emperor and to the States—his abduction to the castle of Wartburg—remarks on the act—description of the place—habits of Luther—his chase—his complaints and surprising exertions—he undertakes the translation of the Bible—his exhortation to John Langus—letter to Frederick on his preference of such pursuits—his postillæ—his reply to Ambrosius Catharinus—quotation from the dedication—some account of this work—his tract in answer to James Latomus of Louvain—account and extracts—on the charge of Arianism alleged against him—the archbishop of Mayence’s attempts to revive indulgences—Luther’s insolent letter to him and his meek reply—Fabricius Capito—his tract on private confession—his object not to abolish but to restrict confession—his tract on the abolition of private masses—to encourage the Augustinians, who had already begun to do away with them—the dedication—the work divided into three parts—object of each of them—quotations—character of Frederick in the concluding address—his conference with the devil, as related by himself in German—Bossuet’s remarks on this matter—the fair representation of it—strength of Luther’s imagination—his tract concerning monastic vows—dedication to his father—its object and the course of the argument—the warning with which it concludes—remarks.

LUTHER departed without interruption on his journey. From Friedberg, on the confines of the Hessian territory, where he arrived on the 28th of April, he addressed two letters, the one to the Emperor, the other, in German, to the States of the empire. They were to the same effect: that he was grateful for the indulgence which had been shown to him; that his conscience had rendered any retractation impossible; that neither a council general nor an imperial diet would have proved an impartial tribunal; that he was ready still to appear before unus-

pected judges to be tried by the test of Scripture and by that only;* and that his cause was not so much his own cause as that of the whole world and of Germany especially, of which the welfare was dearer to him than his own life.

With these communications he dismissed the imperial herald and proceeded to a small town named Hirschfeld, where, at the request of the lord of the place, who was an abbot and a prince of the empire, he preached. This was an act of disobedience to the express prohibition of the Emperor. From Hirschfeld he advanced into the Thuringian Forest, and he was yet near its borders, not far from Altenstein and Walterhausen, when, after night-fall, he was suddenly surrounded by a body of horsemen armed and masked, removed from his carriage and conducted on horseback by circuitous roads to an ancient and secluded castle.†

It was the act of Frederick. That considerate prince was well aware that the exertions of the enemies of Luther would not cease with his departure from Worms, and as he had no means of counteracting the influence then predominant in the imperial councils, he resolved to anticipate the blow by concealing the person of the culprit. It has indeed been suggested, though on no positive authority, that he took this measure with the secret concurrence of Charles. Nor is this impossible,

* “I thought” (said Luther in a letter, also of the 28th of April, to Lucas Cranach, the celebrated painter of Wittemberg, containing an account of these proceedings) “that the Emperor would have brought forward a doctor, or fifty doctors, fairly to confute the monk. But nothing more has been done than just this—Are the books thine? Yes. Wilt thou retract them? No. Then get about thy business. So hebe dich. Oh, blind Germans that we are!”

† Luther to Amsdorf, dated May 12, *In Regione Aeris*. “Ego die qua a te avulsus fui, longo itinere, novus eques, fessus hora undecima ad mansionem noctis perveni in tenebris.”

since his weight among the princes of Germany was too considerable, and the recollection of his eminent services to the Emperor too recent, to permit the latter seriously to persecute a subject whom he protected; and even the measure itself, which sheltered a condemned heretic from the vengeance both of Emperor and Pope, however cautiously taken, was bolder than anything yet promised by the policy of Frederick. But however this may be, the design was not communicated to Luther till the evening previous to his departure from Worms; and the secret was so faithfully preserved afterwards, that the place of his concealment remained for some months unknown to Duke John, the brother and friend of the Elector, and even, as some assert, to the Elector himself.

The castle to which Luther was conducted was situated on the top of a considerable mountain not far from Eisenach, thus overlooking the place of his mother's nativity and the abode of many of his friends, and the scene of his own early education, where his talents gave their first promise of distinction. It was called Wartburg or Wartenburg, as it were the watch-tower of the surrounding country. It had been the ancient and impregnable residence of the landgraves of Thuringia, and had acquired too some religious celebrity as the habitation of St. Elizabeth, and through other legendary circumstances. Its situation was wild and gloomy, and fitted for severe and melancholy meditation.

Luther was here obliged to throw off the dress of his profession, to nourish his hair and beard, and to assume the attire as well as the name of a country gentleman. Junker George* (such was his appellation) engaged,

* "*Mirabilis et monachus et captivus, qui barbam comamque nutriebat, et sub equestri ornatu et Junker George nomine latere debebat.*" In a letter of May 14 to Spalatin, describing his journey and abduction,

though with no great ardour, in the amusements of his rustic associates. "In the beginning of this week" (says he in a letter to Spalatin dated August 15), "I passed two days at the chase, that I might witness the sweetly-bitter amusement of those heroes. We took two hares and a few miserable little partridges, assuredly a noble occupation for men of leisure! For my part I was following my theological meditations even among the nets and dogs, and I only considered the scene as a symbolical representation of Satan, who by his snares and dogs, which are the bishops and theologians, entangles and pursues the weak and the innocent. This most sad mystery of simple and confiding souls came too closely home to my feelings"*

In his confidential correspondence written during this period he complained, that the abundance of the table provided for him tempted him to infringe on the rigid temperance of his monastic habits; that his health suffered through constipation and other causes; that his mind was in consequence enfeebled and his exertions languid; and that he was less able to resist the incessant solicitations with which he was assaulted by Satan.†

he continues: "*Ita sum hic exutus vestibis meis et equestribus indutus, comam et barbam nutriens, ut tu me difficile nosses, cum ipse me jamdudum non noverim.*"

* He also mentions as an "*atrocius mysterium*" that when he had preserved a leveret and concealed it in his sleeve, the dogs nevertheless rushed in upon it and killed it. "*Scilicet sic sævit Papa et Satan ut servatas etiam animas perdat, nihil moratus meam operam. Denique satur sum ejus venationis, &c. . . .*"

† On July 13 he thus wrote to Melancthon: "*Erras vehementer dum tanta mihi tribuis quasi pro causa Dei adeo sim sollicitus. Confundit et excruciat cor tua egregia ista suspicio mei, cum ego hic insensatus et induratus sedeam otio, proh dolor! parum orans, nihil gemens, pro ecclesia Dei. Quia carnis meæ indomitæ uror magnis ignibus. Summa, qui fervere spiritu debeo, ferveo carne, libidine, pigritia, otio, somnolentia. Et nescio, an, quia vos non oratis pro me, Deus sit aversus a*

Yet when we shall have examined the mass and importance of the works which he undertook, and most of which he completed, during this short space of about nine months, so far from joining in his self-condemnation, we shall rather wonder how a single mind could have furnished strength and energy sufficient for such achievements.

He called the place his Patmos, and its lofty and insulated situation amid the waste of the Thuringian forests seemed to justify an appellation which he further claimed for it from his own apostolical labours and pretensions. The greatest of those labours was the translation of the New Testament into the German language. He had no books with him except the Bible;* and thus circumstanced he applied himself to make a complete version of the whole. It appears, however, from a letter written to Amsdorf in the January following, that he felt his strength unequal to contend unassisted with the difficulties of the Old Testament, and determined to defer that

me. . . . Octo jam dies sunt, quod nihil scribo, neque oro, neque studeo, partim tentationibus carnis, partim alia molestia vexatus. Si res melior non erit, omnino Erfurdium ingrediar publico titulo medicos enim vel chirurgos consulam. . . .” (No. 326.) On the 4th of the following November he wrote to Nic. Gerbellius, a lawyer of Strasburg, in still stronger terms. “Mille credas me Satanibus objectum in hac otiosa solitudine. Tanto est facilius adversus incarnatum diabolum, *i. e.* adversus homines, quam adversus spiritu alia nequitie in cœlestibus pugnare. . . . Felix ter, qui impurum istum cœlibatum et vel uredine perpetua vel immundis fluxibus damnabilem honorabili conjugio superasti. . . .” And he adds that his feelings were so strong on this subject as to make him begin to hate the name of nun, monk, or priest. (No. 343.)

* “Exul libris careo, et judicium illud hæreticorum magistrorum, quo Judæos ad nudam Bibliam cogere voluerunt, porto. Sola enim Biblia mecum sunt; non quod magni apud me pendatur libros habere, sed quod videndum, an dicta patrum ab adversario bona fide citentur.”—Epilog. Confutat. Lutheran, &c. adv. Latomum. Op. Luth. tom. ii. fol. 411. He professed to require no knowledge beyond his Bible, nor any arguments beyond the resources of his own strong and confident mind.

portion of his undertaking till he could profit by the learning of his friends. But he never lost sight of it; for he justly deemed that his two great principles—the submission to no authority but that of Scripture, and the assertion of the universal right of private interpretation—would not rest on their proper ground, until the mass of the people should have access to those oracles, and the means of ascertaining for themselves the truth of the doctrines which he taught them. It was from that quarter alone that he had derived all his own knowledge—all that had enabled him to break away from the bondage of Rome and to stand forward as the solitary antagonist of antichrist—all that gave him pride and exultation in the present and confidence in the everlasting future. The same source of light and joy and faith it was his earnest wish to throw open to all mankind,* for the conquest, not only of their ecclesiastical independence, but of their spiritual safety; for this last and greatest consideration was never far from his thoughts even in his fiercest controversies; and it was frequently at the bottom of that very bitterness of indignation which he poured forth so profusely against the iniquities of the Roman tyranny.

He professed to prefer those “peaceful pursuits” of spiritual edification to the troubles and asperities of controversy. In reply to an admonition from Frederick recommending him to abstain from contentions, and confine himself to works of a purely religious character, he wrote as follows:—“I can scarcely say with what reluctance I have been torn away from those beloved

* Hearing that John Langus had also undertaken the translation of Scripture, Luther was so far from being jealous of his rivalry that he exhorted him to persevere. “I would that with God’s help,” he said, “that book might find an interpreter in every town and in all the languages, hands, eyes, ears, and hearts of all men!”

studies to be tossed about in these disturbed waters ; but flesh and blood could not endure the importunate impertinences of those wicked men, and I handled them more roughly than becomed the modesty of religion. Yet, while I admit my fault, I shall hope for pardon from any one who will reflect how much rage and violence and virulence I have been compelled to sustain unsupported, with much loss to myself as well as to those whom I might otherwise have instructed by the exposition of God's Word. Yet my mind so fluctuated in those storms as never altogether to despair of a return to more peaceful pursuits. . . . But I now perceive that that hope was a mere human dream, and that I am daily carried farther into this vast sea, contending with animals great and small which are united against me. Thus circumstanced, and placing before my eyes the example of that holy man Nehemiah, and forsaking the leisurely contemplations of the learned scribe Esdras, I threw aside all hope of perfect peace and prepared myself for war as well, resolved to repel my Arab foes with a sword in one hand and to build up my fortress with the other. If I shall devote myself to one only of these works I shall accomplish neither, since even Jerome says that he who resists not the enemies of the church injures it as much by that neglect as he edifies it by his other exertions."

Thus he wrote on the 3rd of March, 1521, just before his departure for Worms, in the dedication of his *Postillæ** (*Kirchen-Postill*), a work containing a valuable store of Scriptural piety. It is a simple homiletic explication of the epistles and gospels, of a nature so useful and in a spirit so pure as to become in later life the especial favourite of its author ; who indeed designated it as the

* *Oper. Luth.*, tom. ii. fol. 321. The *Postillæ* occupy from fol. 321 to fol. 350.

best of all his books, and one which the Papists themselves perused with pleasure.

Within a month from its publication, in pursuance of his lately avowed principle, he again had recourse to the sword, and composed one of the boldest of all his controversial writings.* A young Dominican, a native of Sienna, named Ambrosius Catharinus, published a book in which he asserted all the pretensions of papal supremacy, and defended the extreme opinions of his brother Thomist, Prierias. This was communicated to Luther by Winceslaus Link, vicar of the Augustinian congregation, and accordingly to Link was addressed the Reply. The following striking passage is contained in the epistle of dedication :—"The absurdity of this Italian is indeed a matter of ridicule, and I would that the Germans were altogether free from the contagion of such folly ; but as we have hitherto received as sacred, and adored with incredibly stupid amazement whatever has been vaunted in the name of Italy or Rome, those singularly pompous and supercilious men† have perceived this, and imagining that Germany was to be their laughing-stock for ever, they have the audacity

* The epilogus of Luther's reply to the book of Ambrosius Catharinus is dated April 1, 1521. Oper. Luth., tom. ii. fol. 350—379. It seems not to have been published till the end of the year. It was composed in Latin, and translated into German by Paul Speratus, who was afterwards a Lutheran bishop in Prussia.

† Eighteen years afterwards Luther observed on the same Italian characteristic :—"As to Sadoletus, I wish he could be brought to believe that God has created mankind out of Italy as well as in it ; but the hearts of the Italians cannot admit this persuasion, though they alone among men have cast off their sympathy with their species, through their arrogance. Sadoletus optarem, ut crederet Deum esse creatorem hominum etiam extra Italiam. Sed hæc persuasio non penetrat corda Italarum ; cum tamen soli præ cæteris exuerint plane humanum sensum præ superbia."—Luther to Bucer., Oct. 14, 1539. (No. 1884.)

day by day to obtrude upon us still more disgusting monstrosities ; for they dream that we are still brutes and barbarians and logs of wood, and that we shall remain so for ever. Meanwhile, being providentially immersed in palpable darkness, they do not perceive that they are themselves doubly brutalised, since, like the king of their Babylon, they are deprived of the food of men and graze like oxen. First came forth Sylvester, and he presently became as mute as a mouse, and then perished ; Gaetan followed, and now Catharinus completes the sacred number. These are the peers of the Thomistic faction in Italy ; from these you may estimate all the rest of them. They are no beetles crawling forth from the slime of the vulgar, but nobles of high blood—the very Astyanaxes of Troy. What then must the Trojans be, if these are their Hectors ?”

The work was composed in the same tone of contumelious contempt for the Pope, his pretensions and his supporters ; and the arguments and accusations were pressed with so much force and fearlessness of severity, as to make it matter of surprise to some how the author could possibly have escaped the effects of a resentment so fiercely and repeatedly exasperated. But the truth was, that the more he insulted his enemies the more he confirmed his friends ; and the increase of fury in the one was more than compensated to the chief of a rising cause by the increase of strength and confidence in the other. Greater moderation at that moment would have been mistaken for fear ; it would have discouraged many adherents ; it would not have conciliated a single papist.

He disputed the interpretation of the fundamental text of the Roman church, and overthrew its claims to infallibility. Then he assumed the offensive, and taking for his text the prophecy contained in the 8th chapter of

Daniel,* he proceeded, with great power of reasoning and expression, to apply it to the Pope. He compared it with the prophetic declarations of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John; and confirmed his inferences by the most vivid descriptions of the tyranny and multiplied impieties of Rome. He entered boldly into the argument respecting the nature of "the Holy Catholic Church" which is the object of our faith, exalted by such lofty expressions of Holy Writ. John Huss had preceded him in this dangerous field, and his opinions on that question were the most detestable among his heresies. Luther pursued them with more clearness, and supported them with far greater power; and while he maintained that the church so exalted was an invisible church, composed of the body of the saints, whose inward sincerity and real piety can be seen by none but God, he proved in the strongest language that it was not the pontifical hierarchy—the conspiracy of popes and prelates with all their subordinate dignitaries, who had usurped for their temporal and corrupt establishment the name of the universal church. He asserted that the only necessary signs of a church were Baptism, the Sacramental Bread, and the Word of God. He attacked the sacrifice of the mass, the invention of new sacraments unauthorised by Scripture, the worship of relics, monkery, the corrupt doctrines and morality of the universities; and thus shook, by the storm of his vehement declamation, the

* Verses 23, 24, 25.—"In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the praise of princes, but he shall be broken without hand."

strongest holds of priestcraft and the most specious of the pillars of the papacy.

In the seclusion of his Patmos he appears to have returned with increased satisfaction to his more purely spiritual labours. But scarcely had he resumed them when he was again roused to contention by a publication of James Latomus, a theologian of Louvain. He replied (in June, 1521) in a tract* dedicated to his friend Justus Jonas, and dated from "The place of his pilgrimage." "You will scarcely believe," he said, "with what reluctance I tore myself away from the peaceful learning of Christ, to which I had devoted myself in this Patmos, to waste my time in reading the triflings of a brambly and thorny sophist, a man fallacious from the crown of his head to the very sole of his foot. . . . I suspect he must have thought that Luther was carried off or condemned to perpetual silence, and that they were all at liberty again to occupy the public with the tyranny of their sophistry, which it is no venial sin in me to have diminished; and I would that I could consummate that sin by its total ruin. . . . The prodigy of Rome sits in the midst of the church and vaunts itself as the Godhead. The high-priests flatter it, the sophists are obsequious, the hypocrites do anything for it. Meanwhile the evil one exults in spirit and yawns with his insatiable mouth, and Satan sports in the destruction of the souls of mankind."

His great object in this work was to establish against many ignorant and many ingenious cavils his fundamental doctrine of justification by faith. But he interspersed his arguments, as was his fashion, with much fierce invective both against the sophists and the prelates

* "*Rationis Latomianæ pro Incendiariis Lovaniensis Scholæ Sophistis redditæ Confutatio Lutherana.*" Oper. Luther. tom. ii. fol. 379—411. The Preface is dated on the 8th, the Epilogus on the 20th of June. "Vale ex Pathmo mea."

of the age: "Yet do I much fear, wretch as I am, that I have been too sparing and modest in my remarks upon the Pope and the pontiffs, the collusive associates of the devil; that I have not sufficiently reflected on those thousands of souls which are cast into endless perdition by Antichrist and his priests and his sophists, those pests and plagues of earth and of all contained in it."

Latomus had alleged, as a charge against him, his former submissions to the Pope. In the preface he noticed this; and so far from seeking shelter in any plausible explanations, he immediately admitted and deplored his weakness: "I am truly sorry that I did make such serious submissions; but in truth I then held respecting the Pope, the councils, the universities, just what is vulgarly taught us. For though there was much in their system which seemed to me absurd and very far removed from Christ, yet I restrained my thoughts for above ten years; for I could not but believe that there must be some theologians lurking in the academies who would break silence, if these things were really impious. But as I grew in knowledge, so I increased in courage; in fact they took great pains to undeceive me by an egregious display of their ignorance and wickedness. For had they not revealed those qualities in such vast abundance, but continued to dissemble, they would assuredly have kept me in my folly and senselessness even to the end. But I thank our Lord Jesus Christ that, in return for this temptation, he hath so honoured and enriched me with knowledge, as to leave me now perfectly confident that the Pope is that final prodigy predicted in all the Scriptures—the Antichrist; while the universities are the synagogues of the synagogues of Satan, in which the sophisto-theologians, those swine of Epicurus, hold their degrading dominion." By such expressions, proceeding from the deliberate indignation of his better in-

formed heart, he made a ready and early atonement for the vacillation of his first proceedings, and at once obviated any imputation of inconsistency that might be derived from it.*

Albert, an Elector of the empire, and Archbishop of Mayence, and other sees, had lately received from Leo, as the crown of all his dignities, and the surest means of attaching him to the pontifical interests, the rank of Cardinal. He thus became the most exalted and powerful churchman in Germany, perhaps in Europe. Yet being moderate in his principles, or at least mild in his temper, he had hitherto taken no violent part in the proceedings against Luther. But now, presuming on the disappearance of the Reformer and under the shadow of the edict of Worms, he went so far as to endeavour to re-establish the sale of indulgences, and to return, after four years of

* There is a passage in this work in which Luther objects to the defining of articles of faith in unscriptural expressions, and mentions the word *homousion* as an instance of evil produced by the opposite practice. And though he guards this observation by expressly disclaiming the Arian doctrine, this was not enough to save him from the charge of being an Arian *at heart*—and that too from Bellarmine! The following is the passage. After disparaging the authority of the fathers in comparison with that of the Apostles, and inculcating the duty of abstaining from all new and profane—that is unscriptural—words, he proceeds: “Nec est quod mihi homousion illud objectes adversus Arianos receptum. Non fuit receptum multis, iisque præclarissimis; quod et Hieronymus optavit aboleri; adeoque non effugerunt periculum, hoc invento vocabulo, ut Hieronymus queratur nescire, quid veneni lateat in syllabis et literis; adeo illud Ariani magis quam Scripturas etiam exagitabant. . . Quod si odit anima mea vocem homousion et nolim ea uti, non ero hæreticus. Quis enim me coget uti, modo rem teneam, quæ in concilio per Scripturas definita est? *Etsi Ariani male senserunt in fide*, hoc tamen optime, sive malo sive bono animo exegerunt, ne vocem profanam et novam in regulis fidei statui liceret. Scripturæ enim sinceritas custodienda est, nec præsumat homo suo ore eloqui aut clarius aut sincerius, quam Deus elocutus est ore suo.” Opera Lutheri, t. ii. fol. 407.

transient turbulence, to the peaceful practice of former generations. Accordingly the banner of the Pope was once more unfurled at Halle, and the people were again summoned to pay the hereditary tax on their credulity. At the same time having discovered in his diocese an ecclesiastic who, in defiance of the canons, had married, he caused him to be imprisoned.

Luther heard of these proceedings and immediately exerted all his power to stop them. He composed a short tract in German, "Against the Idol of Halle," well suited to rouse the popular indignation against the new cardinal. At the same time he addressed to him (on the 25th of November) a letter of strong and almost insulting expostulation. He informed him that he had a book in readiness which, should he publish it, would overwhelm the prelate with shame—yet that it should be published, if the scandal of which he complained were not immediately removed. He reminded him that he had already twice shown mercy to the house of Brandenburg in his person, for it was he who had deserved the original obloquy. This was the third warning: let him desist then from plundering the flock committed to him, and exhibit the character of a bishop rather than that of a destroyer. Let him reflect moreover how notorious the deception in regard to indulgences was now become, and how one poor beggar, standing on that ground, had resisted and vanquished the Pope and all his myrmidons. Finally, he insisted that an answer should be returned to this communication within a fortnight.

An immediate answer was returned, and it was composed in the very meekest spirit of humility. The cardinal thanked him for his brotherly admonition; he assured him that the subject of his complaint had been already, as he hoped, removed; that, as to himself, he

was a miserable sinner, the filth and corruption of the earth ; but that his endeavour should always be to discharge the office of a pious and ecclesiastical prince.

That a simple monk, with no professional dignity, with no avowed protector, excommunicated by the Pope, and proscribed by the Emperor, should have assumed so high a tone of authority and menace, in addressing a cardinal and an elector, may be ascribed to his uncompromising faith, and the perfect reliance which he placed on the holiness of his cause, and on the favour of an Almighty guardian. But that the prelate should have bowed before the insult—that a practical lesson of humility should have been taught by the evangelical monk to the proudest and most pampered of all the sons of Rome—this is a singular circumstance, and requires some explanation. Had the motive been merely fear, the practised politician would have been more careful to veil it. But it so happened that the confidence of Albert was at that time possessed by a man of moderation and piety. Wolfgang Fabricius Capito was well disposed towards Luther, and desirous, like all the good men of that age, for some amendment in the system of the church. But he disapproved of all violence in acts or expression, and hoped to attain his purpose by mild measures and courtly language. He prevailed upon the prince to set the example of such courtesy. At the same time he addressed a private letter to Luther, in which he reproved his disrespect towards established authorities, and reminded him of the duties that he owed both to princes and to prelates. He remarked upon the imprudence of giving offence to powerful persons, who were in truth well disposed towards the cause of Reformation ; and he declared that the archbishop was even then engaged in devising a safe and expedient method for promoting the interests of the Gospel.

Luther was not softened by the smoothness of the former of these letters, nor deceived by the plausibility of the latter. He replied to Capito (on the 17th of January, 1522) at considerable length, and with equal sense and boldness. He justified the strength of his expressions in the defence of evangelical truth, and excused his inexperience in the manner of courts and the arts of flattery and dissimulation. He questioned the sincerity of the prelate, and for that reason abstained from answering his letter; but in conclusion he exhorted him—and entreated Capito to enforce the exhortation—to resign his dignity of cardinal and the plurality of his sees, and to devote himself to the ministry of the Gospel—since it was a dangerous presumption in one, for whom the duties of a single parish would be too weighty, to affect the superintendence over so many churches. In respect to Capito himself, he offered him his perfect friendship, so long as he should obey the word of holiness, and his decided enmity, should he forsake that ground and enter into any collusion with the cardinal in matters pertaining to religion. “My charity is ready to die for you; but if you touch my faith you touch the pupil of my eye. Ever stand in awe of my faith.”*

The publication of the tract, which he had indeed prepared, was prevented by Frederick, jealous perhaps of the honour of a brother elector, and it was not till some time afterwards that it saw the light.†

* *Fidem nostram nunquam non timete.*”

† The Elector had endeavoured to suppress his first epistle (of Nov. 25). But we find an indignant letter from Luther to Spalatin, of the 11th of Nov. (No. 346), in which he expressly refused obedience: “*Primum non feram quod ais, non passurum principem scribi in Moguntinum. . . potius te et principem ipsum perdam et omnem creaturam. si enim Creatori ejus Papæ restiti, cur cedam ejus Creaturæ? . . . fixum est te non auditum iri.*”

Three other important works, directed against other practices of the Roman church, were composed by Luther during his seclusion at Wartburg—"Concerning Private Confession," "Concerning the Abolition of Private Masses," "Concerning Monastic Vows." I shall treat them with great conciseness, in the order in which they were published. His tract on private confession was written in German, and addressed (on the 1st of June) to Francis Sickingen, his zealous disciple and supporter. His object was not altogether to abolish confession, but rather to regulate it according to the precepts of Christ, as delivered in the 18th chapter of St. Matthew. But against the practice of auricular confession, as it then existed in the church, he advanced many substantial arguments.

As an instrument of morality, he showed that it was either useless or pernicious. He objected to the scrupulous detail of circumstances exacted from the penitent. He mentioned the alarms which a tender conscience must suffer from an imperfect confession, and the perpetual temptation which was presented for dissimulation and falsehood. He observed, that the interrogations of the confessor were often no better than lessons of licentiousness. He remarked on the interests which led the priesthood to abuse the privilege in the houses of the sick and feeble, and at the death-beds of the wealthy.

As the means of grace, he maintained that the law of confession, which was a mere law of man, was in direct opposition to the doctrine of justification; since, through the imposition of arbitrary satisfactions and consequent absolution, it inculcated a vain reliance upon human works and human merits, and withdrew mankind from the only path which could conduct them to salvation. He held that the confession of a Christian should be free and unconstrained, proceeding from sincere

contrition and the secret and ardent purpose of spiritual regeneration.

His tract "On the Abolition of Private Masses" was dated on the 1st of November, 1521; it was sent to Spalatin on the 11th, but not completed till the January following.* This was not the first occasion on which he had treated that subject in the same spirit. He had assailed the abuse in a German sermon in the year 1520; in his book on the Babylonish captivity, and in that against Ambrosius Catharinus. And his arguments had produced so much effect, that the Augustinians of Wittemberg had already acted upon his principles, and thus set the first example of practical reformation. To them was this work thus dedicated: "It has been signified to me, my beloved brethren, that you have begun first of all to abolish in your congregation that abuse of (what they call) masses. I was delighted to learn this, as it proved to me that the word of Christ had not been without effect among you. Yet was my joy disturbed by some anxiety, lest there should be some of you, who have not brought the same constancy and freedom of conscience to this arduous work. For not to mention the projects which the pontiffs of idols and the high priests of Baal are daily devising for the consternation of the infirm in faith, while one of them erects his filthy bulls of indulgences, another throws married priests into prison. . . . it is sure to happen that of all living men you will be the most reproached, as men who have dared, though so few of you, to innovate and alter all things divine and human. What sacrileges, crimes, impieties, will they not hurl against you, even

* The dedication "*Fratribus suis Augustiniens. Cœnob. Wittemberg*" was dated "*Ex Eremo. Die omnium S. S. Anno 1521.*" The concluding exhortation was dated *Mense Jan. 1522. Oper. Luth. t. ii. fol. 441—468.*

those who appear to themselves and to the world to be serious, prudent and pious men ! It is assuredly a great undertaking to struggle against the customs of so many ages, against the consent of so vast a multitude, against the authority of such mighty people, to close one's ears against their murmurs, invectives, condemnations, and to raise up a Scylla of invincible strength against the perpetual howlings of their tempests. If you are founded upon a firm rock, I well know that these storms will blow upon you in vain. But if you are built upon the sands, what a fearful ruin overhangs you !

“ We must consider besides how difficult it is to recal to the knowledge of sound piety a conscience vitiated by long habits of impiety, and to cure its infirmity ; and of this indeed I find daily experience in myself. By how many healing remedies, by what powerful balm of Gilead, by what convincing and evident truths of Scripture, did I at length, and scarcely at length, so fortify my own conscience, as to dare to stand alone in opposition to the Pope, and to believe him to be the Antichrist, the bishops to be his apostles, and the universities his brothels ! How often has my heart trembled and palpitated, and reproachfully objected to me their strongest, indeed their only, argument : ‘ Art thou alone wise ? Are all the rest with one consent in error ? Have so many centuries lived in ignorance ? What if it should be thou who art in error ? What if thou shouldst involve multitudes in thine error, and drag them to eternal perdition ? ’ . . . Yet Christ at length confirmed me by his sure and faithful words, so that my heart now no longer trembles or palpitates, but repels and insults these papistical arguments, and like an impregnable shore laughs at the threatenings of the storm.

“ Moved by such experience and such reflection I

resolved to send this epistle for the confirmation and consolation of those who are yet too feeble to endure the assaults of a bullying adversary and a trembling conscience. For with this perfect confidence must we strive and persist, not only most utterly to disregard and condemn the judgments of the whole world, not only to arm ourselves in death against the gates of hell, but even to struggle against the temptations of God, and to prevail, like Jacob, against God. For even weaker brethren may close their ears against the voice of the world; but who can close his conscience against Satan, against the judgment of God? The world will call us mad and wicked—but this is all—it will not make us so. But conscience by a thousand means will cast us into condemnation, unless it be on every side fortified by the sure, mighty and salutary word of God. This it is to be built upon a rock; this is that infallible certainty after which we are seeking. . . ”

Some particular circumstances connected with that measure of the Augustinians, to which Luther here alluded, will be mentioned hereafter. At present we shall proceed to notice very briefly the principal contents of his tract. He divided it into three parts. In the first he attempted to prove, that under the new covenant the only priest or sacrificer was Jesus Christ; that the ministry of the Gospel was not confined to any privileged profession, but common to every Christian; that the priestly office of the old Testament was entirely abolished, together with the obligation of sacrifice and burnt offerings; that those who had usurped that name and office were not of God; and since they were not of God, most manifestly they were of the Devil.* In pursuance of this doctrine he asserted the right of

* “Quod enim a S. Scripturis auctoritatem non habet, manifestissimum est ex Diabolo esse,” &c.

evangelical teaching for the whole body of the faithful. He maintained that the sacred ministry was not attended by any indelible mark of the operation of the Holy Spirit, but that it belonged to every man whose knowledge and piety qualified him to exercise it. He then proceeded to abolish all distinctions between the orders of the hierarchy; he censured pluralities of sees and other ecclesiastical abuses; and after much severe invective against the existing prelacy, he contrasted the apostolical picture of a primitive Christian bishop with the ignorant and impious sons of perdition who now thronged the church, and by their masses and sacrifices, and false doctrines, and superstitious rites, and all their other mummeries, converted it into the theatre of Satan.*

“There yet remains,” he continued, “the third division of this Satanical priesthood, which is the throng and multitude of monks†—a mixed race, neither priests, nor laymen, nor monks, but, that they may answer the perfect description of a monster, compounded of all and each of these. In as far as they are priests they are liable to all that I have said about the priesthood, sacrifice and ministry. In as far as they are monks they must be described in a separate volume, together with their absurd, impious, impossible and never-observed vows;

* “Quare, Christiane lector, tibi ante oculos pone turbam infinitam hanc sacerdotum et monachorum cum suis missis et sacrificiis, legibus et doctrinis, cultibus et universis operibus, et videbis non nisi scenam et theatrum quoddam Satanæ, populum impium perditionis, ut Petrus appellat, iræ Dei reservatum in æternum.” In another place he calls them—“Equestre et heroicum sacerdotum genus qui se principes ecclesiaram nominare audent. . .” In another: “Estis ergo episcopi vocatione Satanæ et constitutione apostoli ejus Papæ. . .” And again: “Fœdæ simiæ et meræ larvæ hominum, non minus indoctæ quam impiæ, inutilissimum scilicet hominum Chaos, quod vix idoneum est larvas ipsas episcopales gestare. . .” Ibidem.

† “Sylva et arena monachorum. . .” Ibidem

so no more of them for the present. It is enough now to say that the people of Christ is simple and uniform, admitting no sect, no distinction of persons, no layman, no clerk, no man shaved, no man anointed ; in short no monk, but all living together without discrimination of marriage or celibacy, each according to his own discretion, as is the case in civil communities : while bishops, presbyters, elders, deacons, ought to differ in no respect from other Christians, except only in the office of the word and the sacrament, as a senator differs from his fellow-citizens, only in the office of governing the city."

In the second division of his tract he attacked the sacrifice of the mass with his usual power and vehemence. He divided his argument under eight heads, grounded on the literal interpretation of Scripture. "The word of Christ is on one side ; the word of men on the other. Christ regards those who regard his word : and those are his enemies who have exiled his word, though there should be as many Popes as there are leaves of the forest, as many cardinals as there are grains in the harvest, as many bishops as there are drops in the sea ; and all these covered with gold and gems and purple, riding on mules and asses. . . . Let these wolves then and these spectres condemn your proceedings and raise up sacrifices, in their ignorance, and vaunt their fathers and their councils and their common usage. Christ one and alone may suffice for you, with his few followers in this world, concerning whom it is perfectly clear, that He made no sacrifice of bread or wine in His last supper. He will not condemn you because they judge you, but will crown you with glory, because you have followed Him in preference to them. You have on your side the word and example of Christ, which you may exhibit and oppose even to the gates of hell. And what have they on theirs ? Fillets, caps, shaven crowns, rings and seals.

These are the arguments with which they prove whatever they attempt to prove. On these things hang all their right, all their power of discerning questions of faith; and if you strip them of these you will find no more of the episcopal character in them than you will find in that ass or that log of wood. . . .

“That papistical sacrifice is a thing so monstrous that the Pope himself with his whole body of corruption is scarcely more so. We devour the whole of it, and yet we offer the whole of it to God! that is to say, if we offer it we cannot devour it, if we devour it we cannot offer it, and so, while we are doing both we are doing neither. Who ever heard such absurdity as this? These suppositions contradict and consume each other; and so the consequence is necessary and infallible that the Eucharist is no sacrifice at all. Let the wiseacres of Louvain and Paris remove this difficulty.”

In the seventh division of his arguments, he ascribed the enormous wealth of the church to the abuse in question: “It is clear enough on what foundation bishoprics, colleges, monasteries, temples, chapels, altars—the whole of this sacerdotal kingdom of the papistical church—have been constructed. The whole has been built on the sacrifice of the mass—on the most flagitious universal idolatry, on lies the most impure, on the abuse of the Eucharist the most perverse, on an infidelity more than pagan. And hence, through the just retribution of God, hath it fallen out that the wealth of these men serves to no better purpose than the most profuse luxury, lust, pomp, sloth, in a word, to nothing but the Roman abomination. It was meet and right that the inventor of this blasphemous priesthood should have this recompence.”

In the third part he returned to “the office of the priesthood, the laws and sacrifices of the Pope,” and drew a powerful antithesis between the Church of

Rome and the church of Christ. He pursued this into various particulars; he contrasted the priesthood of the one with that of the other; the canon law with the law of Christ; the decalogue of Scripture with the decalogue of Rome. And he concluded by an address to his disciples of Wittenberg, exhorting them to persist in the course which they had taken, to fill up the measure of their present scandal, and to deserve by their righteous conduct the insulting invectives of the papists. In this address we find, what is singular as coming from a subject and one so peculiarly situated as Luther, a very fair and impartial picture of the character of Frederick. After some remarks upon the delusion which led that prince to waste such large sums on the superstitious adornment of his church of All Saints, the writer proceeded: "Yet in this, through the grace of God, you may glory—that our sovereign is far removed from tyranny, or folly, or rashness, or cruelty; that he is very enduring of truth, very calm and deliberate in his judgments; and yet that he is no less formidable to the wicked than he is respected by the good. These circumstances are a very seasonable protection to you; and by their aid you may the more easily accomplish what you have undertaken, since it is by such opportunities that God invites you and stretches forth his hand to help you."*

* It is in this conclusion that Luther alludes to an old prophecy, "se puero," that the Holy Sepulchre would be redeemed by an Emperor, named Frederick. And this he half jocosely insinuates to have been accomplished by Frederick of Saxony—seeing that the Scriptures, wherein Christ had been so long entombed, were now thrown open to the faithful; and that Frederick had been elected Emperor by the unanimous votes of the Electors. "Eratque vere Imperator, nisi noluisset—apud Deum nihil refert quamdiu fuerit Imperator, modo fuerit aliquando. Ludere fortassis hic videor. At ludum sane, &c. . . ." Ibidem, fol. 467.

It was during the meditations whence this very powerful composition proceeded that Luther was visited by some terrible inward agitations. He called them temptations, and ascribed them, as he was wont, to the immediate agency of Satan. And so lasting was the effect which they left upon his mind, that in 1533, twelve years after these occurrences, he published, in German, a narrative of his "Conference with the Devil," respecting the sacrifice of the mass. In this strange production he described his midnight waking, his sweat and trepidation, and the fearful beating of his heart. How pressing were the arguments of the demon! how powerful the tones of his voice! how overwhelming the manner of his disputation! how instantaneous the impression produced by it upon his soul! This dialogue was translated into Latin with some variations and omissions by Justus Jonas, and in the controversies which have arisen on this subject, the appeal has been generally made to the translation. Roman Catholic writers have not lost so fortunate an opportunity to throw scandal and ridicule upon the reformer and the reformation—asserting that he had indicated and avowed the author of his heresy; that, when he taught the impiety of the sacrifice of the mass, he taught it on no other suggestion than that of the devil; that he was the confessed convert and disciple of the spirit of darkness and falsehood. "If the story be true," says Bossuet, "how horrible to be instructed by such a master! If Luther imagined it, with what illusions and gloomy thoughts must his soul have been filled! If he invented it, how sorry an adventure it is of which he makes himself the hero!"

But a fairer interpretation of this singular narrative is that, which is generally adopted by Protestant historians. As soon as Luther had convinced himself that the sacrifice of the Lord's Supper was unscriptural, and

therefore impious, he began to reflect with terror on the consequences which seemed to threaten himself. He had been continually engaged since the hour of his ordination, a space of fifteen years, in perpetrating that impiety and in leading others into the same abomination. Could he hope for mercy at the hands of his judge? Was his ignorance a sufficient excuse for his sin? Could he now make any atonement for it? Or must he regard himself as already lying under irrevocable condemnation?

His soul was vehement and his belief earnest. The melancholy tendencies of his temper were increased by ill health, by solitude, by the gloom of surrounding objects. Hence those fierce agitations of soul, those convulsions of the entire spiritual man, which in the eye of reason and philosophy are indeed extravagant and absurd; but which may nevertheless be the extravagance of noble qualities, and allied to the purest motives that can influence human actions. Under such circumstances of internal disorder and irresolution, the tempter presented himself to the heart,* rather than to the eye, of Luther; and in the design of urging him to utter desperation, suggested to him five arguments. These are distinctly stated by the writer, and their object was to prove to him that the office of the sacrifice, in which he had been so long and so devoutly engaged, was in irreconcilable opposition to the institution of Christ. The temptation was one of terror: if his new opinion were true, to what penalties might he not be liable for the impieties perpetrated during his error! And thus a wish that it might not be true, a partiality for his original

* Luther's own words in the German original are: "Der Teufel fing mit mir in meinem hertzen eine solche disputation an, wie er dann manche nacht bitter und sauer genug machen kan, &c. . . ."

belief, might be roused in opposition to his reason, through a sense of everlasting peril.

We have observed how, in the earlier part of his monastic life, he had been disturbed by similar visitations, also of terror; and we may possibly return to this subject. We perceive too from all his works, how directly and constantly he referred every sort of evil that arose to the immediate agency of the devil;* and how he believed himself especially to be engaged in perpetual personal conflict with the great universal enemy. These considerations will account for this fancied "Conference," without recourse to a less charitable hypothesis. Among the various faculties which were combined in the extraordinary intellect of Luther, perhaps the most powerful was imagination. And though it was commonly counteracted and chastised by sound reason and strong sense, there is scarcely one of his productions which does not exhibit some proof of its erratic predominance. Yet his mind, had it lacked that quality, had been destitute of half its virtue. Since the same energy which in its undue preponderance gave existence to the "Conference with the Devil," produced in its more regular and rational operation those eloquent denunciations of the Roman impiety, those thunders of overwhelming wrath and scorn, which awakened from their long and restless slumber the kindred feelings of more than half the Christian world.

Among the practices of the Roman church, which were now successively subjected to the test of reason and Scripture, that of the celibacy of the clergy was debated with peculiar warmth. The pastor of Kemberg, near Wittemberg, who had formerly been professor of physics

* Many of his private letters, on various subjects, end "Orandum est contra Diabolum!"

in that university, publicly broke his vows; and Melancthon wrote an "Apology" for the act. The pastor of Hirschfeldt followed the example. Carlstadt, also a priest, married publicly and publicly justified that proceeding. But Luther still hesitated, so far at least as the monastic clergy were concerned, and continued meditating in his solitude on the peculiar nature of their obligation. He was doubtless influenced by this distinction, that, while the secular clergy had received the law on pontifical compulsion, after much resistance and remonstrance, the monks had taken a voluntary vow. He may possibly have dreaded the scandal of the change; he may have trembled lest the Reformation should be associated, even foolishly and falsely, with the notion of moral laxity—seeing that, through the inveterate prevalence of an evil habit, many would be less offended by the fornication of a priest, than by his marriage. However, after much reflection, he triumphed over such scruples; and the result was his book "Concerning Monastic Vows." Here he expressed the bold decision, at which he had at length arrived, with his usual vehemence. It was this: That all such vows, under whatsoever circumstances and with whatsoever motive they might have been taken, were absolutely null, and in violation of that Christian liberty to which all men were bound to return.

This book* was written towards the conclusion of the year 1521, but through the interference of the court of Saxony it was not published till somewhat later. Luther dedicated it to his father, in recollection of the sorrow with which the latter had witnessed, almost sixteen years

* "De votis monasticis D. M. Lutheri judicium. Scriptum sub finem anni 1521, impressum mense Januario, anni 1522." The dedication is dated *Ex Eremitio*. xxi. Novemb. Anno MDXXI. Oper. Luth. tom. ii. fol. 477—514.

before, his rash adoption of the very profession which he now condemned so fiercely. "Yet God," (he said) "whose mercies are without number, as his wisdom is without limit, has raised up a great good, even out of those errors and transgressions: and would you not rather have lost an hundred sons, than have failed to behold this good? For Satan appears to have foreseen in me, even from my boyhood, something of the sufferings which he is now sustaining at my hands, and consequently to have employed in his rage such extraordinary means for my destruction, that I have often asked myself, whether I alone among men have been thus persecuted by him. But it was the will of God, as I now perceive, that the wisdom of the universities and the sanctity of the monasteries should be made known to me by my own certain experience, by my personal observation of their iniquities and impieties, in order to remove the possible pretence that I condemned things of which I was ignorant. Therefore have I lived a monk; not without sin indeed, but without crime; for in the Pope's kingdom ungodliness and sacrilege are so far from being held criminal, that they are deemed the very perfection of holiness."

In this work, which he always accounted among his most valuable compositions, Luther exhausted the arguments by which monachism is assailed. Without disputing the general obligation of vows, he proceeded to the consideration of their legitimacy, and endeavoured to prove by a series of arguments the impiety of those against which he was contending. His first object was to show, that they not only did not rest on scriptural authority, but were in direct opposition to it. Then he exhibited them as at variance with the essential doctrine of justifying faith, since they were inculcated as being in themselves meritorious, and as the means of attaching

an undue and unscriptural value to the works of the law. Next, in pursuance of the same principle, he contrasted them with the true spirit of Christian liberty, of which he thus explained the nature: "Christian or evangelical liberty is liberty of conscience, by which the conscience is set free from works, not from the performance of them, but from the trust in them. For conscience is not a virtue of operating, but of judging, and it judges concerning works. Its office is (as St. Paul saith) to accuse and to excuse, to condemn or acquit, to give terror or security; not to act, but to pronounce respecting actions and distinguish them, as they condemn or save in the presence of God. Accordingly Christ has set it free from works, while He teaches it by his gospel to put no trust in works, but to have confidence only in His mercy. . . ."*

In the fourth and following divisions of his treatise he contended that monastic vows were in opposition to the precepts of God, to charity, and to reason—seeing how few there were, among the multitudes who took them, by whom they were, or could possibly be, observed. He concluded by a short admonitory exhortation to those who should be persuaded by his arguments, not to act upon them hastily and without serious self-examination, allured by the love of novelty, or urged by a contempt or hatred for mere human institutions; lest through the suggestions of an unfounded remorse for their apostacy and broken vows, they should finally relapse from their imperfect conversion into a worse than their original condition.

It was well in Luther to publish this warning, though there might be no great hope of its efficacy. For in the confusion which presently followed, and which, if not

* De Votis Monast. Op. Luth. t. ii. fol. 490.

occasioned, was at least accelerated by this composition, among the numbers who broke loose from their seclusion and rushed with eagerness into a world for the most part unknown to them, many were doubtless impelled by the most questionable motives.* And these, when they found how little personal consideration rewarded their apostacy, and how few of the promised pleasures of their emancipation were realised, returned with heavy and repentant hearts to reclaim the refuge they had deserted. Such was not indeed the sort of remorse foreseen by Luther. But when he suggested a deliberate religious conviction, as the only proper motive for casting off the monastic yoke, he sufficiently guarded his readers against the danger of any relapse into their former impiety.

* On the 28th of the March following Luther thus wrote to John Langus: "I dare say that you had sufficient reason for quitting your monastery, though I could wish that you were above all reasons—not that I blame the liberty of going forth, but that I could wish to cut off from the enemy all pretence for slander. . . . I see many monks go out, for no better reason than that for which they entered—for the sake of their belly and carnal liberty—by means of whom Satan will go far to corrupt the good odour of our preaching. But what can we do? They are lazy selfish men; and it were better for them to sin and perish out of a cowl than in one—*ne bis pcreant si hac vita puniuntur.*" (No. 379.)

CHAPTER XVI.

MELANCTHON—LUTHER'S RETURN TO WITTEMBERG.

Origin and early education of Philip Melancthon—his connexion with Reuchlin—lectures at Tübingen—appointment to the Greek professorship at Wittemberg—his reception there, and immediate intimacy with Luther—journey to Leipzig and subsequent controversy—his defence of Luther against the university of Paris—his *Loci Communes*—his apology for the pastor of Kemberg—on the celibacy of the clergy—affairs at Wittemberg during Luther's absence—commotions at Erfurth—the Augustinians at Wittemberg desire the abolition of private masses—inquiry into the matter by the Elector—arguments and negotiations—a commission appointed by Frederick—five articles of Beyer—reply of the deputies and perseverance of the university—perplexity of Frederick—popular commotion headed by Carlstadt—convention brought about by Beyer—declaration of the general meeting of the Augustinian Order in those provinces in six articles—progress of the Reformation elsewhere—the sect of fanatics at Zwickau—the origin of the Anabaptists—their pretensions—the leaders expelled from Zwickau find refuge at Wittemberg—the countenance they receive from the divines there—perplexity of Melancthon—the judgment of Frederick—the reply of Luther—the tests by which he would examine them—the influence which they obtain notwithstanding—danger of confusion at Wittemberg, and general desire for the return of Luther—this strongly dissuaded by the Elector, as perilous to the reformer—Luther determines to appear—Frederick urgently objects—on what grounds—remarks on them—Luther perseveres and writes his celebrated Letter—remarks on his supposed pretensions to the apostolical and to the prophetic characters—Conclusion.

From this time forward the name of Philip Melancthon will be continually before our eyes. On one or two important occasions we have, indeed, already seen him contending by the side of Luther. But circumstances placed him at this moment in a more prominent situa-

tion; and he maintained it long and faithfully, with great advantage to the interests of his cause, and with immortal distinction to himself. We shall therefore briefly examine the history of his earlier life.

Philip Schwarzerde, which is in Greek (*Μελανχθων*) Melanethon, was born at Bretten, a small town in the palatinate, situated near the banks of the Rhine, on the 16th of February, 1497. His father, an honest and religious man, was an armourer, of celebrity in his trade, a native of Heidelberg, and a near relative of the celebrated Reuchlin, or Capnio. To this connexion he was indebted for his classical surname, and possibly for his literary tastes and liberal principles. For it appears that he attracted at a very early age the attention of his kinsman, and received from him, in approbation of his boyish acquirements, a present of two books—they were a Greek grammar and a Bible. It is not absurd to suppose that the studious inclinations of the scholar may have been decided by this circumstance; and that the talents, which would otherwise have been employed on other subjects, were thus turned into their destined channel, Greek and sacred literature.

His first master was one John Hungarus, of whom he spoke with respect and affection in after life. At the age of twelve years he went to a school at Pfortzheim. Thence he was removed to Heidelberg, thence to Tübingen, where he acquired so much reputation as to deserve, even at that early age, the honourable notice of Erasmus.* He received, in 1514, the degree of Doctor in Philoso-

* “In 1515, in prim. edit. N. T., Erasmus spoke of him as follows:—*At Deum immortalem, quam non spem de se præbet etiam adolescens et pæne puer Philippus ille Melanethon, utraque literatura pæne ex æquo suspiciendus! quod inventionis acumen! quæ sermonis puritas! quanta reconditarum rerum memoria! quam varia lectio, quam verecunda regiaeque prorsus indolis festivitas!*” *Apud Scultet. Ann. 1516.*

ply, and was immediately appointed to give public lectures on rhetoric, and to explain Virgil and Terence and other authors.

He had been thus engaged for three years, when the Elector of Saxony requested Reuchlin to recommend to him two learned men, to be professors, the one of Hebrew, the other of Greek, in his university of Wittenberg. Reuchlin replied, that for the former chair he would have presented Œcolampadius, had he not been already engaged at Basle ; that he was acquainted with only two other persons qualified for that office, Paul Riccius, a layman, physician to the bishop of Gurck, and Conrad Pellican, a monk in the monastery of Ruffach, in Alsace. For the latter, he at once and confidently recommended Melancthon. This took place in the year 1518 ; and as soon as the appointment was completed, he communicated it to his young disciple in the following terms :—

“I have received the letter of the most religious prince, signed with his own hand, in which he promises to be kind and propitious to you. I will therefore now address you in no poetical expressions, but repeat to you that true promise made to the faithful Abraham (in the 12th chapter of Genesis) : ‘Get thee out from thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, into a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing.’ And thus, my Philip, my work and consolation, my soul tells me that it will be with thee.”

He arrived at Wittenberg on the 25th of August (1518). Low in stature, of timid and ungraceful demeanour, he created a first impression far from favourable. But this was soon effaced. “On the fourth day,” Luther thus wrote to Spalatin, “he pronounced an ora-

tion extremely learned and terse with such universal favour and admiration, that you need no longer trouble yourself how to recommend him to us. We presently lost sight and thought of his stature and person, and rejoice in the solid substance of worth contained in it. We thank the prince and yourself for the service done to us. I could desire no better Greek instructor. But I fear that our poor fare will not suit his delicate frame, and that we shall not keep him long with us on account of the smallness of his salary. Despise not this youth. He deserves the highest consideration."

Luther wrote in the same strain to John Langus: "A most excellent and learned Grecian, Philip Melanethon, is our professor of Greek—a boy and stripling if you consider his years, but well worthy to be one of us, if you regard the variety and almost universal extent of his learning—so powerful is he, not merely in the knowledge of the two languages, but also of their literature. He has likewise some acquaintance with Hebrew. . . ." The intimacy between Luther and Melanethon commenced from this moment. There is extant a letter of the latter, written about this time, in which he expressed his most ardent and entire devotion to Luther.* And the difference of about fourteen years in their ages may have been one cause of the ascendancy acquired by the latter, which was due indeed to the superior force and courage of his character, and which he retained over the milder spirit of his friend and faithful fellow-labourer, even to the end of his life.

* "*Martinum, si omnino in rebus humanis quicquam, vehementissime diligo et animo integerrimo complector. . . .*" And speaking of Luther in his account of the Leipzig Disputation—"In Luthero, longo jam usu mihi familiariter cognito, vivax ingenium, eruditionem et facundiam admiror, sincerum et pure Christianum animum non possum non deamare." Gerdesius. *Hist. Reform. Monumenta Antiqua*, tom. i. num. xx. p. 203.

Melancthon, issuing from the patronage of Reuchlin, adopted without difficulty the principles of Wittenberg. In proof of his earnestness he attended Luther and Carlstadt to the disputation of Leipzig. And though he took no public part in that debate, yet we find that by his private suggestions to the disputants he attracted the angry sarcasms of Eck. On its conclusion he addressed an account of it to Œcolampadius, written with surprising moderation. Though composed immediately after the transaction (July 21, 1519) while passions yet ran high, it contained no exaggerated statements or eulogies on his own party, and mentioned the general admiration excited towards Eck by his various and distinguished talents.*

Yet that vain polemic was offended by this narrative, and published some remarks on it, in which he treated the powers of its author with great contempt, and contrasted the mediocrity of his acquirements with the more extensive erudition of Luther. Melancthon defended his narrative by a short, judicious and argumentative apology. Luther rejected with indignation the distinction which was offered to himself at the expense of his friend. And the attempt, if such it was, to sow the seeds of jealousy between the two ablest of his opponents, was altogether unsuccessful.

On the 15th of April, 1521, the university of Paris published an official and elaborate condemnation of the doctrines of Luther.† The introduction to this document displayed, in very unequivocal expressions, both the theological spirit and the ecclesiastical principles of its authors. “Oh impious and unblushing arrogance, de-

* “Cæterum apud nos magnæ admirationi plerisque fuit Eckius ob varias et insignes ingenii dotes.” Ibidem, ap. Gerdes. M. A. t. i. p. 208.

† “Determinatio Theologiæ Facultatis Parisiensis super Doctrina Lutherana hactenus per eam visa.” Luther. Oper. tom. ii. fol. 419.

serving coercion by chains and censures, nay, by fire and flames, rather than conviction by reason ! since he who thus thinks and writes renounces the first principles of his faith and makes open profession of impiety. For does not that man proclaim his own infidelity, whosoever sets himself above the belief in the orthodox faith, in the holy doctors of the church, in the sacred councils ? For what will he believe, who refuses to believe in the Catholic church ? or how shall he be numbered among Catholics, who does not listen to the church ? when we learn from the oracles of truth that he who heareth not the church is to be held as a Gentile and Publican.” Among all the monstrous productions of Luther, the captivity of Babylon was pronounced to be the most pestiferous ; since, on the one hand, it was so filled with errors as to bear no slight resemblance to the Koran ; while, on the other, it revived and brought to light again all the crimes of all the heresies that had ever deformed the church—the iniquities of the Bohemians, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the Heracleonites, the Perpuicians, the Erians, the Lamperians, the Jovianists, the Artotyristis and all the other prodigies were all revived and reproduced in that one work ! The theologians then extracted from it an hundred and four detached propositions regarding many important points both of doctrine and discipline, to which they applied the usual expressions of condemnation.*

* The following is one among many proofs of the ignorance and temerity of the Parisian divines. Luther had spoken with disrespect of the works of Dionysius the Areopagite : he had observed that the author had no solid erudition ; that his meditations were like dreams ; that in his mystical theology he was more of a Platonist than of a Christian, and that he sported in allegories in his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. The Parisians condemned this proposition, as false, rash and arrogant, and injurious to a holy man celebrated for his eminent learning, &c. Every one now knows that the books ascribed to the Areopagite are spurious,

Luther had always looked with less despair towards the university of Paris than towards any other learned body in Europe; and had he been compelled by prosecution to seek refuge in any foreign land, it is probable that he would have sought it at Paris. The Gallican church had ever made boast of its liberties, and it had maintained them, not without many struggles and much severe experience of the ambitious and tyrannical spirit of Rome. At least since the time of Gerson, it had been proclaimed as the principle of the Sorbonne, that a general council was superior to the Pope; and as lately as the year 1517 an appeal founded on that principle had been published by it. There were, besides, many individuals in France who were attached to the principles of the Reformation. Yet when he reflected that Paris was the parent of scholastic theology, and that she nursed and dressed it with all the fondness of a mother, the Reformer could scarcely be surprised at her hostility to his innovations, and her violent adhesion to a system, of which so vicious a portion was so intimately endeared to herself.

Melancthon immediately replied to the decree of the Parisians, and traced their opposition to its real cause.* "It is agreed that Paris did give birth to that profane scholastic system which they pretend to call theology, and which is in fact the destroyer of the church. The gospel is obscured, faith is extinguished, the doctrine of

and the production of some Platonist. But besides the necessity of supporting the composition, as a part of the system established, the supposed author was in this case traditionally connected with the history of Paris; and so the national vanity was interested in defending the honour of the book which passed under his name.

* "*Adversus furiosum Parisiensium Theologastrorum Decretum P. M. pro M. L. Apologia.*" Oper. Luth. tom. ii. 427. There appears among Luther's works a "*Determinatio II. Almæ Facultatis Theolog. Paris,*" written by some Lutheran, and professing to be a Reply to Melancthon's Apology. It is an ingenious caricature of *Determinatio I.*

works received; and instead of being the people of Christ, we become the people, not even of the law, but of the ethics of Aristotle; and Christianity, contrary to its whole sense and spirit, is converted into a sort of philosophical mode of living." The reply of Melancthon is not free from harsh and offensive expressions,* while it wants the force which we find in the polemic compositions of Luther. And the latter, though he professed his entire satisfaction with the work, yet, when he soon afterwards translated into German, armed it with some additional stings and infused into it some of the ardour of his own energy.

In 1521 Melancthon published a far more valuable work. His "*Loci Communes Rerum Theologicarum*" were a sort of summary of Christian doctrine, in which the truths asserted by Luther in his various compositions were reduced to a system, and thus more easily inculcated. The subjects of difference with the Roman church were distinctly stated, with reference to scriptural proofs and without controversial argument—a method of persuasion better suited to moderate minds than the most eloquent appeals of impassioned reason. It was the opposite to the method of Luther—yet was the latter so sensible of its advantages and so little bigotted to his own style, that he bestowed the strongest possible eulogy on the production of his friend; he ranked it incomparably higher than the writings of the fathers, and pronounced it to be the best book that he had ever seen, except the Bible.

The apology for the Pastor of Kemberg, already mentioned, which is universally ascribed to Melancthon, was composed probably in the summer of 1521. In this

* For instance: "*Pudeat tandem Sorboniæ Galliam tam impie delisantis! Oh insanos et impios homines!*" "*Oh impios sophistas!*" &c. &c. The charge of impiety, as being of all others the most vague, was that most abundantly reiterated by both parties.

short but learned and argumentative work the writer did not enter into the more difficult question of the obligation of monastic vows, which was soon afterwards treated by Luther, but confined his reasoning to the single subject of the celibacy of the clergy. And his determination on this matter was at least disinterested, since he had neither assumed, nor had any intention to assume, the sacred character. We shall not pursue the arguments by which he defended his principles. These he founded, first, on the manifest sense of the well-known Scripture passages; and next, on the practice of the ancient church, and on the canons not only of the earliest, but also of one of the later, councils (that of Constantinople under Justinian II. in 707). He proved from the records of the churches of Cologne and Constance that the law of celibacy was of still more modern reception in Germany. He alluded to the crimes and scandals to which it gave perpetual occasion; and expressed his astonishment at that antiscriptural system of morality which, while it condemned the marriage of the clergy, connived at their foulest impurities. Respecting the oath, which was taken by all ecclesiastics, to observe the canons of the church, he maintained that it was necessarily to be received with this reservation: provided those canons contained nothing in opposition to the law of God, or dangerous to salvation. This apology, having been pronounced by Cardinal Albert of Mayence to be an insufficient defence of the pastor's disobedience, was followed by a very short appeal, under the same name, and probably from the same pen, to the reason and clemency of Frederick.* Such was the first step taken

* Both are published among Luther's works. Tom. ii. fol. 438. 440.
 1. "Contra Papisticas Leges Sacerdotibus prohibentes Matrimonium Apologia Barthol. Bernandi Veltkirchensis, Pastoris Kembergensis qui nuper Ecclesiæ suæ consensu uxorem duxit." 2. "Alia Defensio ad Fridericum Ducem Saxoniae."

towards a change in that very essential branch of the discipline of Rome; and such the first occasion on which Melancthon turned his talents against any one of the established practices of the church.

During the seclusion of Luther, the direction of affairs at Wittemberg devolved in a great measure upon Melancthon, who already began to be regarded as the second among the chiefs of the Reformation. His position was in itself difficult—it became more so, from his wanting the experience, the authority, the natural courage and the acquired confidence of his master. The court of Saxony exhibited at this time a caution in its countenance which bordered on hostility; it impeded the publication of Luther's writings,* and even imposed some restraint on the privilege of public disputation. Melancthon and the leading academicians were disheartened, and betrayed in their communications with Luther an unbecoming despondency.

He suggested on his part bolder resolutions and a firmer trust in the righteousness of their common cause. "Meanwhile, do thou, Melancthon, stand forward as the minister of the word, and fortify the walls and towers of Jerusalem, until they shall assault thee likewise. Thou knowest thy vocation and thy gifts. For thee singularly do I offer up my prayers—and my prayers, I doubt not, have some efficacy. Do thou then lend thy hand, and let us bear this burden by turns. Thus far we two alone are in battle—they will attack thee after me."† At one time, he recommended no implicit obedience to the admonitions of the court; he observed how he had some-

* See a very angry letter of remonstrance from Luther to Spalatin, written at Wittemberg about the end of November (No. 351). Luther at that moment had made a sort of outbreak from his retirement, and passed a few days in concealment in Amsdorf's house. But he presently returned.

† Luther. Epist. (No. 316) dated May 12. "E regione Avium."

times ventured in his own difficulties to disregard its injunctions; and how much of his success was due to the more daring policy, which in contempt of its counsels he had adopted.* At another time, he addressed to his disciples and parishioners† the most affectionate expressions of religious exhortation. He taught them to seek confidence in the future from the retrospect of the past. He reminded them of the dangers which had already surrounded himself, and from which he had been preserved only by the manifest providence of God. Thrice had he appeared in the presence of his enemies, at Augsburg, at Leipzig, and at Worms, and thrice he had been mercifully rescued from their grasp. Nay, on the last occasion, his foes had been so distrustful of their cause, that they dared not so much as to reason or contend with him, but did no more than clamour for his retractation. Yet was not this Luther's doing, but the work of a propitious providence, which had caused the spirit of so many arrogant theologians to quail before a single mendicant monk.

The confidence derived from such reflexions being simple and unchangeable, like the principles on which it was founded, was the more easily communicated to his friends, as it burnt the brighter in himself.

Meanwhile the Reformation was now beginning to assume another aspect. Hitherto the battle had been fought by writings and disputations. Propositions had been put forth and confuted. Virulent censures and fierce accusations had been advanced and retorted by both parties. The horrors of innovation and heresy had

* On July 13 (No. 326) he writes to Melancthon: "*Obsecro deinceps semper prævenite inventa, consilia Aulæ non sequimini, sicut ego hactenus feci. Dimidium factum non esset, si ab illius (Spalatini) consilio preprendissem; sunt etiam ibi homines, sicut et nos.*"

† On some day before Nov. 1. Luth. Epist. (No. 342.)

been painted in the most frightful colours on the one side, while, on the other, the general depravity of the existing system, the impiety of many particular doctrines and practices and the antichristian vices of the presiding hierarchs had been denounced in expressions, than which human language could furnish nothing stronger. Still the conflict had been confined to words. However sanguinary the zeal of the Roman faction, they had not succeeded in shedding the blood of any of their opponents. However deep the convictions and violent the resolutions and threats of Luther and his followers, they had not attempted to force any of their opinions into practice.

This last circumstance is to be ascribed in a great degree to the sound sense and provident discretion of Luther. It was one of his earliest and wisest principles, that the Reformation must be based on the general convictions of the people; that the multitude must be first instructed; that their reason and their conscience must be engaged in the cause of truth, and their indignation animated against the established superstitions; and thus, when the foundation should be duly laid, that the change in the forms of worship, which must unavoidably follow, would be free from the destructive convulsions usually attendant on sudden revolutions.

But it was easier for the Reformer to rouse the passions of his countrymen, than to control what he had raised. It was too much to expect that those, whom his indignant language had taught to see nothing but immorality and superstition in the persons of the clergy and the ceremonies of the church, should patiently await his signal, before they gave expression to the feelings with which he had inspired them. And this to his great disappointment and anxiety he was now destined to learn. The first act of insubordination was committed at Erfurth. The canons of that place expelled one of

their body on the charge of Lutheranism. The scholars of the university, together with many of the common people, immediately broke into their houses and committed some acts of violence. The senate connived at the outrage; but Luther most unequivocally condemned it. And while he admitted that the profligacy of the ecclesiastical body deserved some chastisement, he pronounced his decided disapprobation of all popular commotion. Such were not the methods of advancing the cause of Christ or the honour of his Gospel. Such intemperate demonstrations of favour were only, in his eyes, so many proofs that his labours were not yet entirely acceptable to God, and that Satan was still permitted to insult and mar them.

But the outbreak at Erfurth was a mere casual act of insubordination, proving indeed the spirit and principles prevailing there,* but not followed by any attempt at any lasting innovation. The place where the Reformation first invaded practice was the same in which its principles had taken the earliest and deepest root, and the men with whom such change originated were even, what Luther himself was, monks and Augustinians.

The Augustinian monastery at Wittenberg was crowded with students who had been attracted by the fame of Luther, and brought with them dispositions favourable to his doctrine. These were confirmed and esta-

* In 1521 the theologians of Erfurth published with one consent a declaration in favour of Luther. "*Intimatio Erphurdiana pro Martino Luthero.*" "*Nos almæ Universitatis Magistri Baccalarii Theolog. Facultatis omnes singuli, tum conjunctim tum divisim, desuper maturo habito consilio unanimes unoque corde. . . . profitemur præsentium tenore Martinum bene et prorsus Christiane huc usque scripsisse. . . .*" And then they exhorted all the students to resist his persecutors, and to oppose "*tyrannica illa et plusquam diabolica excommunicatio papistica contra innocentissimum veritatis relatores M. Lutherum.*"—*Autographa Reformationum.*

blished; and the point to which as monks their attention had been especially directed was the abuse of the Eucharist. They objected to the celebration of private masses and of masses for the dead, and demanded the abolition of both. Conrad Heldius, the prior of the convent, supported by a strong party of the brethren, declared his attachment to the ancient usage, and frequent disputes arose in consequence. After some time, towards the end of the summer of 1521, Gabriel Didymus, a person of weight in the society, denounced in a public discourse the offensive practices, and declared besides that the communion in one kind was contrary to the institution of Christ and to the usage of the ancient church. It was in vain that he was checked by the authorities. The great body of the community were on his side; and these determined forthwith to act upon their principles, and desisted from the performance of private masses. This proceeding, being conducted without violence or scandal, received the approbation of Luther, as we learn from the introduction to his treatise "On Private Masses," which was addressed to those reformers.

Heldius carried his complaints before the court; and as some monks, to the number of thirteen, whose obedience he endeavoured to enforce, deserted their vows and quitted the monastery, and as the dispute was rapidly extending both among the students and the inhabitants, Frederick, who saw all these transactions with considerable apprehension, commissioned his chancellor Pontanus to investigate the affair. His method of proceeding was this. Certain deputies from the university and the chapter of canons were chosen by those bodies to ascertain the reasons by which the monks justified the abolition of private masses, and to report them with their own observations to the Elector. The deputies were

Justus Jonas, president; Philip Melancthon, Nicolas Amsdorf, and John Döltz of Veltkirch, canon.* The reasons offered by the monks were few and simple: That private masses were founded on the doctrine of the sacrificial character of the mass which was now proved to be false; that they were contrary to the institution of Christ and to the observance and injunction of the apostles (1 Cor. ii.); that the Saviour had so manifestly established the communion in both kinds as to entail the sin of direct disobedience on all who should communicate otherwise.

The deputies confirmed and enlarged upon these arguments. They dwelt on the peculiar sanctity of this sacrament, and on the visitations impending over all who desecrate it. They maintained that the Lord's Supper, in its original institution, was no more than the distribution and eating of the body and blood of Christ; that all besides was the work of the Pope of Rome; that manducation by a priest was of no more efficacy to others than manducation by a layman; that one could not possibly receive the communion for another, more than one could be baptised for another; moreover, that all this fabric of masses rested on the principle that they were a good work, expiatory of our own sins and of the sins of others—a principle in direct opposition to the most essential article of the evangelical doctrine, justification by faith, and to the true use of the sacraments; and that the multitude of masses, thus superstitiously established in every monastery, only furnished means of feeding the cupidity of the sordid portion of the clergy, and exciting the repugnance of the more pure and good. They urged in addition that the prayers of the priest which attend

* The names of Carlstadt and Schurff appear likewise in the original MS. of the "*Sententia Delectorum*," but there only.—Beausobre, *Hist. Reform.*, tom. ii. p. 187.

the taking of the sacrament can have no efficacy above, seeing how generally they proceed from a mind corrupted by avarice, or indifferent through the habit of frequent repetition; and that the masses for the dead, and numbers of other similar impostures, being invented by fraud through the lust of gain, and impudently usurping the name of holy ceremonies, ought no longer to be endured or connived at, even though the whole world should be offended by the scandal. The deputies concluded by exhorting the Elector, as a godly and Christian work, to restore the purity of the sacrament, especially the celebration in both kinds, at the risk of being stigmatised as a Bohemian or heretic; yet at the same time they recommended the temporary toleration of private masses through indulgence to the weaker brethren, until it should be safe to abolish them altogether.

Frederick then gave a commission to Christian Beyer, a doctor and principal magistrate of Wittemberg, to consult further with the deputies, and directed him to press upon them the following considerations:—That this was a matter of great moment, affecting the condition of the whole church, and demanding mature deliberation and the co-operation of greater numbers than were thus far engaged in it; that if the truth were really on their side it would presently be adopted by the majority, and all obstacles would then disappear; that he wished for information at what period the present system of masses was introduced and the original form abolished; that, as the temples and monasteries were for the most part founded and endowed for the celebration of masses, the revenues should in all justice be withdrawn as soon as the masses ceased, as having no longer any legitimate object; and that, if one party should assume authority to denounce the other as heretical and hostile to the church, dissensions and seditions would spring up and multiply,

which it was the especial duty of the ecclesiastical college and academy to prevent.

To the five articles thus communicated by Beyer, the deputies respectfully replied, that the two grand abuses of which they complained demanded immediate removal at any risk of scandal or defamation, since the paucity of those who acknowledged the evangelical truth was no argument against perseverance in maintaining it; that as those were but a small minority who followed Christ on earth, and for this reason only because they were illuminated by the spirit of God, so was there now little hope that the pure form of the Eucharist would be embraced, unless it should be given them from above; that the most ancient colleges, monasteries and churches were founded not for the performance of masses and canonical hours, but for the religious education of the young; that they were applied to that purpose as late as the time of St. Bernard, being expressly endowed for the maintenance of the pastors and teachers, and the support of indigent scholars and other poor; that, though the more modern foundations were unquestionably established for private masses and such like superstitious purposes, yet ought they no less to be abolished, since the deluded men who bequeathed them their revenues would certainly, could they now be better instructed, revoke their donations; that if, in consequence of these necessary changes, dissensions and tumults should arise, the fault would not rest with those who were endeavouring to diffuse the truth of God, but with those who for the perpetuation of their dignity, their indolence and their luxuries, were obstructing the light from heaven, and waging war for their hearths against their altars.*

* “*Pro focus contra aras bellum gerere.*” The documents on which this narrative is founded are the following:—1. “*Sententia quorundam Delectorum ab Academia Wittembergensi ad Illustr. Principem, &c.*”

The Elector now began to perceive that persons sincerely animated by a religious spirit are not to be influenced by the deepest considerations of human policy. Nevertheless, since the great majority of the canons were opposed to any change, and their opposition threatened some sedition in Wittemberg,* he persisted in his disapproval of any immediate innovation; at the same time he allowed the subject to have free and public discussion both in the schools and from the pulpit. But it was now too late for such moderate counsels. The university and the monks might have consented to the delay, but the people were not so patient. They were as strongly convinced of the impiety of the proscribed practices, and far less accessible to any prudential argument for continuing them. They demanded the immediate extinction of an acknowledged enormity, and they wanted nothing but a leader to enforce this demand: they found one in Carlstadt. A few days before Christmas, on his own authority, in the church of which he was arch-deacon, he celebrated mass in German, without previous confession or any of the usual ceremonies,† amid some indecency and violence on the part of the students and

2. "Instructio quid dilectus noster et fidelis Christianus Beyer, Doctor, ad Præpositum Justum Jonam, &c. . . . deferre ac commemorare debeat." 3. "Informatio et deliberatio delectorum ab Univ. ad allatam instructionem clementissimi D. nostri de Missa." 4. "Synodi Augustinianorum de Libertate Monachorum Sententia."—See *Lutheri Opera*, tom. ii. fol. 470—477.

* Luther actually pressed Spalatin (on Nov. 25) to exhort the Elector at once to dissolve the establishment of the canons of Wittemberg, as instruments of superstition and profligacy; and he recommended that the revenues, after the expiration of vested interests, should be appropriated to the maintenance of the poor. This, he continued, would be a munificence indeed worthy of the Prince, and one which would open an eternal kingdom to his possession.

† "Neglectis omnibus ceremoniis."—Seckend. (from the Letters of Schurff), lib. i. § cxx.

the people, and without any shadow of countenance either from the senate or the university.

The university persisted in maintaining the necessity of some innovation in the forms of worship; the senate, guided by the policy of the court, declared its opposition, and a serious dissension appeared to be impending, when Beyer, who was a member of both those bodies, contrived to effect a convention, and one which in effect was entirely favourable to the former. It was agreed that, as the sacrificial character ascribed to the mass was proved to be unscriptural, some important alterations should be introduced into the service of that sacrament; that provision should be made to prevent the mendicity of monks, and that the images should be removed from the churches. These articles, which were the first authorised step towards a reformation in externals, were drawn up in the beginning of the January of 1522; but when they were presented to the Elector for his sanction, he decidedly refused it: he even affected great indignation at the arrangement, declared that the councillors had exceeded their instructions, and altogether disavowed their convention. Yet he took no measures to cancel it; and though he threatened the reformers with the visitation of the bishops, and consigned them to all the rigors of ecclesiastical control, he refrained from any exercise of his own authority. The parties defended their proceedings by the justice of their cause and the impending danger of a popular commotion.

Meanwhile, during the progress of these negotiations, and before the conclusion of the year 1521, the vicar, priors and brethren of the Augustinian order in the provinces of Misnia and Thuringia assembled in chapter at Wittemberg and published a very important declaration. It contained six resolutions, which touched the very foundation of the monastic principle, and

doubtless had their effect both on the senate and university.

1. Permission was given to all the brethren of that congregation either to adhere to the monastic state or to forsake it. 2. Those who remained were enjoined to retain the usual dress and rites. 3. Those rites were to be modified both by alteration and abrogation, yet in such fashion that neither faith nor charity should be in any respect offended. 4. Mendicity and masses for the dead were prohibited. 5. Those among their number best qualified to teach the word of God, both publicly and privately, were to be selected for that purpose, and the rest were to apply to manual labour, according to the original institution. 6. Strict subordination was declared necessary in order to facilitate the alterations in their rites, and for the sake of charity and the avoidance of all scandal. So rapid was the progress of this innovation—in so short a time did the reform, which commenced with the single abuse of private masses, spread to the very roots and heart of monachism, and menace the absolute demolition of the entire system.

While Wittenberg was thus assuming its proper position in the van of the Reformation, several other cities and provinces evinced a similar ardour, and ranged themselves under the same banner. In spite of the Edict of Worms and the clamours of the bishops and of all the ecclesiastical and most of the civil authorities, a purer doctrine was in many places addressed to the people, and some faithful preachers were found who loved their Bible better than their church. At Friberg, in Misnia, at Halberstadt, at Erfurth, at Bremen, and other important towns in the Netherlands, in Friesland, Pomerania, and Denmark, (to say nothing for the present of Switzerland,) missionaries or converts rose up and boldly inculcated the new principles—men whose names indeed

are for the most part lost in the obscurity of contemporary annals, but whose services, whose perils, and whose faith, have doubtless reserved them for an everlasting recompence. Many of these were mendicant monks, a circumstance at first sight singular, since this body was justly stigmatised by the chiefs of the Reformation as one of the grossest scandals of the church. Yet among its numerous members there were some examples of holiness; they possessed no wealth or honours to close their hearts against the truth; they had some experience in public declamation, and by the austerity of their lives they were hardened against every fortune.*

Among the first which received the opinions of Luther was the town of Zwickau in Misnia. They were nourished there in private assemblies and animated by the public preaching of two distinguished converts. Frederick Myconius, a native of Franconia, was a pastor of learning and eloquence, and possessed the personal friendship of Luther.† Of Nicholas Hausman it is necessary to record no more than the eulogy by which his master

* Among the first preachers at Erfurth were Ægidius Mechler and Conrad Kling, Franciscans; Peter Geltner, Antony Masa, and John Robetstein, in part or all Dominicans; Nicholas Fabri and Chilianus, Augustinians. We learn that immediately after Luther's departure from Worms preachers went about there with portable pulpits and addressed large congregations: these were probably mendicants.

† Myconius was eight years younger than Luther. He entered early into a Franciscan convent and was ordained in 1516. In the year following, when Tetzel was retailing his indulgences, Myconius presented himself before the cross and pleaded for the appendix to bull—"Let them be given gratuitously to the poor, for the love of God—*Pauperibus dentur gratis propter Deum.*" Tetzel of course replied with official insolence: Myconius rejoined with warmth, and a keen dispute followed on the saving efficacy of indulgences. He presently began to preach the gospel to the Thuringian churches. His first acquaintance with Luther was formed in 1518, when the latter was on his way to Augsburg; and so intimate was the subsequent intercourse, that when Myconius was on

has immortalised him—"What we preach he lives." And it had been happier for that city—happier for the German people too, and the sacred cause now rising among them—had its inhabitants listened to no other doctrine than that of Hausman and Myconius, or had they learnt at once to distinguish between the sober revelations of the gospel and the distempered ravings of fanaticism. But never yet was any great and wholesome change accomplished, of which the progress and effects were not in some degree marred by the intemperate violence of some professing the same or similar views.

There was a draper at Zwickau named Nicholas Storch, who succeeded in influencing the religious opinions of several among the lower classes. He then selected from his followers twelve, whom he called apostles, men for the most part of his own trade, and seventy whom he designated his disciples. The chief of these were Mark Stubner, Martin Cellarius and Thomas Munzer, of whom the last was peculiarly distinguished by the seditious virulence of his popular harangues. It was in vain that Hausman and others of more rational principles contended with this phrenzy. The pretensions of the fanatics were far bolder and loftier than theirs, and thus they carried the vulgar along with them—for they laid claims to a direct commission from above; it had been delivered by a voice so clear and distinct as to compel their obedience; they had enjoyed familiar conversations with the Deity; they were acquainted with the mysteries of the future. These were mere dreams; but besides these they had their doctrinal scruples, and among the

the point of death in 1541 he ascribed his recovery to the fervid consolations and earnest prayers of his friend. They died in the same year, 1546, Luther on February 18, Myconius on April 7. He visited England at the beginning of Henry's proceedings and at the express desire of that prince.

sacraments of the church there was one of which they often proclaimed their especial abhorrence, that of infant baptism. The fermentation of these various doctrines, if we are so to call them, among the lowest and most ignorant occasioned some acts of turbulence. The civil authorities at length interfered to repress the sect, and while several were seized and cast into prison, Storch, Stubner and Cellarius made their escape to Wittenberg.

Stubner seems to have had some slight tincture of learning, the other two were absolutely illiterate: yet they propounded their impostures with the same effrontery to the divines of Wittenberg as to the artizans of Zwickau, and raved about their graces and revelations with equal vehemence and solemnity. One would have supposed that among such able theologians, so imbued with Scripture, so practised in disputation, so disciplined by the acute and sound intelligence of Luther, these wild pretensions would have been treated with contempt and indignation. Yet was it not so. Carlstadt listened to them with attention and favour, and even the more considerate mind of Melancthon was perplexed and shaken. He remembered the scriptural promises of the outpouring of the spirit upon all the faithful, and he deemed it not improbable that it might be the pleasure of Providence to signalise the revival of his gospel by the same heavenly gifts with which he had protected its infancy. He was acquainted with the persons of the fanatics and the exact nature of their claims; he had frequent conferences with one of them, Stubner. This man assured him that his commission was immediately from God, and that if he had written no books, it was in consequence of God's express prohibition; he spoke of Luther with authority; he pronounced him to be on most points right, so far as he went; but a higher spirit than his was

on the point of appearing. He prophesied too; and in this pretension he was singularly unfortunate, for he foretold the immediate conquest of Germany by the Turks, the massacre of all the married clergy, and the approaching end of the world.

Very soon after the arrival of these refugees, Melancthon wrote to announce it to Frederick, to state his perplexities and to offer his counsel. He admitted that he was inexpressibly moved by the marvels which they propounded;* he declared that though they might possibly be the instruments of Satan, yet he had his reasons for not despising them; that there was but one man capable of discerning with certainty what spirit they were of, and that they ought immediately to be brought into the presence of Luther. Frederick, after due examination into all these opinions, replied with his wonted caution. He expressed his decided objection to the introduction of any doubt or dispute respecting the ancient and venerable doctrine of infant baptism; he deprecated any repetition at Wittemberg of the seditions which these exiles had occasioned at Zwickau, and recommended that they should be peaceably dismissed; while he refused to permit, for sufficient reasons, the return of Luther.

To Luther likewise Melancthon had not failed to communicate his anxieties, and he received a reply which ought to have allayed them. Not indeed that even Luther rejected at once and without inquiry the pretensions of the enthusiasts—only he recommended his less experienced disciple to listen to them with suspicion and sift them with the closest scrutiny. He declared that he had yet heard nothing of their words or acts, which might not be counterfeited by Satan; that their spirit

* “*Quibus ego quomodo commovear non facile dixerim!*”

was to be proved; that their vocation was to be examined—since no one is sent of God without receiving either some unquestionable sign, or some commission from men's hands. So the holy prophets held their office after the law and prophetic ordinance, and “so even we are invested with ours by the hands of men.” He remarked besides that those pretenders were then to be most distrusted, when they boasted of their visits to the third heaven and their easy and familiar communication with the Deity.* This letter was written on the 13th of January, 1522. Four days afterwards Luther addressed another to Spalatin, in which he spoke of them lightly, as objects of no great concern to him; at the same time advising that no violence should be offered them, especially by any who professed his doctrine.†

Howbeit, without sufficiently heeding either the politic suggestions of Frederick, or the religious admonitions of Luther, Melancthon continued to give his countenance to the suspicious refugees. He protected them from every insult; he received Stubner into his own house, and even procured him some pupils. And it is even asserted‡ that he and Carlstadt began to instruct their

* To this, which is plain good sense, Luther adds a number of *βασανισμοί*, tests for the exploring of those spirits, which are not very comprehensible to the uninitiated. But there is one among them of which the value must be felt by every true Christian: “You must sift their private spirit, whether they have experienced any inward distresses of soul, the death and hell and the comforts of the new birth unto righteousness. If you hear nothing from them but smooth, tranquil, and what they call forsooth *devout* religious contemplations, regard them not—for there is wanting the characteristic of the Son of Man, the Man of Sorrows—there is wanting the cross, the only touchstone of Christians and the sure discernor of spirits. . . .”

† “Propter Prophetas quidem Cygnæos non venio neque mutor, neque me movent. Nolle tamen eos vinculari, præsertim ab iis qui nostra jactant.” Luther to Spalatin, Jan. 17, 1522. (No. 360.)

‡ Seckendorf admits that Carlstadt was guilty of these absurdities, but

scholars to renounce the study of Plato, Aristotle and other heathen philosophers and all profane literature, and to confine their industry to the Bible and the mechanical arts. And it is further related that they set a great example of humility by respectively adopting the trades of a baker and a husbandman. However this may be, the fanatics on their part acquired confidence and consideration from this patronage; and they retailed their visions and revelations to the credulous multitude with such effect, as gradually to gain many partisans, and to threaten to insinuate their viperous sect into the very cradle of the Reformation.

Meanwhile Carlstadt was proceeding with augmented zeal in his assaults upon the established superstitions. He inflamed the passions of the people almost to sedition; he cast out the images from the churches, and treated the ancient practices so contumeliously, that the citizens and students began to consider those as the best Christians, who most outraged the observances of the church and insulted its ministers. All moderate men began to tremble, and the deeper their attachment to the cause the greater were their apprehensions. All eyes were directed towards Luther; all hands were raised to supplicate for his return; the whole existence of the Reformation seemed to be centered in him. Frederick saw the peril, and knew as well as any man

he exculpates Melancthon. Lib. i. 49, § cxxi. Yet Camerarius, admitting that such were the principles of the Anabaptists, relates the great attention which Melancthon showed to Stubner: "*Tradidit ei discipulos instituendos; habuitque ille scholam privatam, frequentem et fructuosam. Hunc igitur Marcus (Stubner) amicum et socium et comitem et adiutorem atque etiam ducem nactus ita tum propemodum semestrem substituit Wittembergæ.*" He adds that all then began to call for Luther; and that, had not the latter hastened his return, "*res Wittembergica non modo graviter afflicta, sed perditâ et funditus diruta fuisset.*" . . .—*De Phil. Melancthon's vita narratio diligens*, Lipsiæ, p. 50.

the genius and authority of Luther. Yet was he so fearful for his safety, should he quit his retirement at that moment, in the face of the edict and in defiance of the combined powers of the imperial and papal parties, that he refused his consent to the proposal.

But Luther himself was not influenced by any personal consideration, nor moved by any of the apprehensions which disturbed his friends. "There is no reason for fear;" (thus he wrote to Spalatin) "rather give praise to God and rejoice in the certain expectation that all will end well." He believed his presence at Wittenberg to be essential to the safety of his cause. He abandoned himself to that one conviction; and at once announced to the Elector his resolution to return.

Frederick redoubled his exertions to prevent it. He instructed a confidential officer, the governor of Eisenach, to represent to him in the clearest language the risks that he would run. If he should so soon reappear and resume his part in the drama, the Emperor would demand his person, and Frederick would have no pretext for refusing it; his promise to Luther extended no farther than to secure him an impartial tribunal—this was all that the other could justly ask, or that he could grant; the Diet of Nuremberg was at hand, and one of the subjects of its deliberation would be Luther; his only chance of preservation was in concealment. At the same time the Elector did not suppress the anxiety occasioned to him by the late popular disturbances, and by the principles which had given birth to them. If indeed the doctrines of Luther were those of the truth, there was no sacrifice that he would not readily make in their defence. But he could find no certain assurance of this. And since the prelates of the church had lately promised that the gospel should be preached to the people, as well by themselves as by faithful ministers appointed for that

purpose, he thought it advisable to await the result of those authorised exertions.

There are two things which strike us as peculiar in this communication ; first, the unreserved expression of solicitude by the Elector about the person of Luther, and his avowed anxiety to save him from the hands of his enemies ; next, the vacillation in his religious principles—the readiness he showed to snatch at a hope of reformation which he must have felt to be groundless, in order to escape from the immediate storm which menaced the tranquillity of his dominions. In excuse for this hesitation it must be observed, that the matters which chiefly occupied him were matters of state ; that these ecclesiastical disputes formed after all only a small portion of the objects of his attention. Besides, it was ever one of the most sacred maxims of the Roman church that the laity had no knowledge and could take no cognisance of theological controversies ; so that his plea of uncertainty respecting the real merits of the present question was justified by the usual practice and principles of the age. Threats and symptoms of sedition ; the presence of rebellious refugees from a neighbouring state ; the encouragement afforded to them by the chiefs of the Reformation ; the movements of the students and the people, under the same guidance, without law and even against law ; such were not objects of satisfaction even to a liberal prince, nor were they calculated to increase his confidence in the rectitude of the cause with which they were connected.

Again, when he looked on the political side of the picture ; when he saw the Emperor in close alliance with the Vatican, aiding its designs and defending its despotism ; when he saw the Council of Regency, which represented the imperial government in Germany, decidedly adverse to the progress of the Reformation ; and when he

observed how few men of power and influence were among its avowed supporters ; it was not strange that he should tremble at the prospect of so unequal a contest. And lastly, and especially, we should make allowance for that close clinging to things established, to the prejudices imbibed in childhood, to all that has been represented as sacred, from which no man can disengage himself without difficulty, from which it cost Luther himself so many struggles to be free, and which presses with a double chain upon any one who is on or near a throne. These circumstances duly considered, we shall rather admire the Elector for the general magnanimity of his policy, than reproach his apparent weakness on this occasion. Nay, it is not unlikely that his heart was still faithful to the cause, and that he wished to adopt the experiment of the proposed episcopal reform, only as a means of gaining time and avoiding some immediate calamity.

But whether it was in weakness, or whether it was in policy, that Frederick suggested that proposal, it was at once rejected by the determined soul of Luther. His resolution was not for a moment shaken by the feeble counsels of his prince. His spirit would not endure anything approaching to timidity or compromise. He arose and departed from his Patmos, and set his face towards Wittemberg.* But in his way thither, from a place called Borne, near Leipzig, he addressed to the Elector a very remarkable epistle, dated on the 5th of

* I have mentioned that in the preceding November he made a stolen visit to Wittemberg, where he resided for a few days, under the roof of Amsdorf. In a letter then written to Spalatin he expressed his general satisfaction with the condition of affairs and the spirit of his supporters ; at the same time, not withholding a severe complaint against the court, that certain compositions which he had sent from Patmos for publication had been suppressed.

March, 1522, in which he announced the step that he had taken, and defended it on the highest principles. In deploring the proceedings at Wittemberg, and the scandal which they would unavoidably reflect upon the cause of the gospel, he declared: "All the affliction which I have hitherto experienced in the whole affair is as nothing compared to this. Willingly, might it so have been, would I have laid down my life to prevent it. Since it has proceeded so far that we are unable to justify it before God or before man, and it lies as an oppressive weight not only upon me, but what is much more upon the holy gospel. This to my very heart does torment me.

"Respecting this matter, then, most gracious Lord, I answer thus: You know, or if you know not, be now informed, that I hold the gospel, not from man, but from heaven alone, through our Lord Jesus Christ. So that I might very well—as indeed hereafter I shall do—call and write myself his servant and evangelist. All the concessions which I have hitherto made, for the examination of my doctrine, have been made not through any doubt in me, but through humility and deference to others. But now I perceive that these submissions only tend to the dishonour of the gospel, and that the devil will enter in, if I leave him but a hand's breadth of room; so I must, through the compulsion of my conscience, adopt another course." Then followed some very strong expressions of indignation and contempt against Duke George, after which he proceeded: "I will not, however, conceal from you that I have prayed and mourned for him more than once, if only it would please God to enlighten him. I will pray and mourn for him yet once again, and then never more. I could instantly strangle Duke George by a single word, if any end would be attained thereby.

“ And I now wish your Grace to know, that I go to Wittemberg under a far higher protection than yours. I have no mind to beg any protection from you. Nay, I hold, that I can offer you more protection than you can offer me. More than this : If I knew that you could and would protect me, then would I not come at all. These are matters which neither need nor admit the counsel or help of the sword ; God must be the only builder here, without any human care or co-operation. And thus he who has the most faith will be able to give the most protection. And since I now perceive that you are altogether weak in faith, I can in no manner look to you as the man who can either aid or shelter me.

“ When you desire me, then, to inform you what you ought to do in this matter, since you are grieved that you have yet done far too little, I reply with submission—You have already done far too much, and you shall do no more. God will not suffer either your intervention or mine. If you believe this, then will you be secure and in peace ; if you believe it not, I believe it nevertheless, and must leave you to the anxious disquietude of those who do not believe. Since then I refuse you my obedience, you at least are blameless before God, should I be imprisoned or executed. Before men, too, will you be acquitted, if you be obedient to authority, as it becomes a prince to be, and allow free course to the imperial majesty, and interfere in no manner, should it proceed to seize or murder me ; since insubordination is criminal and in opposition to God's will.

“ It seems impossible, when your rank is considered, that you should be called upon to become my executioner. Yet if it should prove otherwise, and you should be seriously pressed to lay hands on me, I will solemnly assure you—believe my assurance or believe it not—that no harm shall befall you on my account either in body, soul,

or estate. It is another being than Prince George with whom I have to deal ; one who knows me right well, and of whom I know some little.* If you had faith, then would you behold the magnificence of God ; but since you have as yet no faith, as yet you have beheld nothing. To God be love and praise for ever and ever, Amen !”

This was bold and independent language to be addressed by a subject to his sovereign—by a simple monk, the son of a miner of Mansfeld, to one of the most distinguished princes in Europe—by a man beset with enemies and threatened with destruction, to the only person on earth who had the power and will to preserve him. Yet was it only the natural expression of that intense religious feeling which had ever been the main-spring of Luther’s conduct, and which seems at that time to have been still further inflamed by retirement and solitude. It was only the inspiration of a soul absorbed in faith, and entirely engrossed by what it believed to be the truth of God.

He saw very clearly the position in which he stood. He felt his own incomparable superiority to all his brother-reformers. He felt that he was the principal, almost the only, earthly instrument for accomplishing the work, and he was sure that it was the work of God. Therefore he was convinced that God was with him, and that he spoke and acted almost under His immediate agency. This was doubtless the extent of his meaning, when he claimed the evangelical character. He pretended not to possess any peculiar gifts ; or to place his mission on a level with that of the apostles of Christ. He intended no more than he had expressed several

* “ Es ist ein andrer Mann denn Herzog Georg mit dem ich handel, der kennet mich fast woll und ich kenne ihn nicht übel.” See Marheinecke, vol. i. end of Chap. x.

months before, in the epilogue of his answer to Ambrosius Catharinus, in somewhat different language: "But I know and am confident that Jesus Christ our Lord lives and reigns, and I am so inspired (*inflatus*) by that knowledge and that confidence, that I have no fear of many thousands of popes. For He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world."*

He is accused too, as it seems to me unjustly, of laying claim to the prophetic character. George of Saxony, stimulated by the bishops of Misnia and Mersberg,† was using his utmost endeavours to persecute the rising Reformation. And on this subject, in a letter addressed to Link, soon after his return to Wittemberg, Luther gave the following expression to his apprehensions: "I much fear that, if the sovereign shall listen to that foolish head Duke George, there will be a tumult, which will destroy both princes and magistrates in all Germany, and involve the whole clergy in their ruin. The multitude is everywhere roused, and has its eyes about it. It neither will nor can be put down by force. It is the Lord who does these things, and yet who hides these menaces and dangers from the eyes of princes; nay, he even designs to consummate his work by means of their blindness and fury: so that methinks I see Germany swimming in blood. Wherefore, if you have any influence, let the rulers be exhorted to decree and act with moderation and without violence. Let them reflect that the people is not now what it has hitherto been. They are labouring for the destruction of Luther; but assuredly Luther is

* "*Major est enim qui in nobis, quam qui in mundo est.*" Addressed to Wincellaus Link, April 1, 1521.

† The bishop of Mersberg was the more active of the two. He was a man whom Luther once characterised as a "*Sancticulum episcopum superbissimæ et avarissimæ humilitatis*—a sanctified little bishop, of most insolent and avaricious humility."

labouring for their preservation. The destruction which they are devising, impends, not over Luther, but over themselves—so far am I removed from having any fear of them. This I do certainly think that I speak in the spirit.* Howbeit, if these things are to be, thus much at least will be granted to our prayers, that our Josias may first repose in peace.”

This passage is by some considered to contain a double prophecy. Yet—as to the former prediction—that seditions and tumults would be occasioned by any violent attempts to oppress a people, no longer involved in ignorance and animated by religious feelings—what was it, but a very easy result of mere human foresight? The princes might be blind to these consequences; or at least they would impute them, not to their own tyranny, but to the rising spirit of innovation. But Luther not only understood the condition of Germany, but he possessed the faculty—somewhat rare indeed, yet most necessary for all who pretend to lead their generation—the faculty of correctly deducing particular inferences from general principles. But even Aleander had arrived, though by a different road, at the same conclusion, when he pronounced, on his departure from Worms, that savage denunciation which has been recorded. In respect to the second of these supposed prophecies—that the death of Frederick would precede the approaching commotions, it was not in fact verified; though, as that prince was in the

* “*Hæc certe in spiritu loqui me arbitror.*” Luther to W. Link, March 19, 1522 (No. 371). A letter written to Gerbelius, a pious priest of Strasburg, on the same or the preceding day, contains the expression of a similar expectation; but in this place Luther ascribed the coming commotions, not only to the tyranny of priests and princes, but also to the perversity of certain evangelicals, who had received the gospel in words, not in deeds; who were full of learning, but void of charity—an allusion to Carlstadt, and, seemingly, to him only.

decline of life, it might very naturally have so happened. But the expression of Luther, when properly considered, is rather an affectionate aspiration, poured forth with his customary warmth, than the oracular display of a foreknowledge divinely communicated.

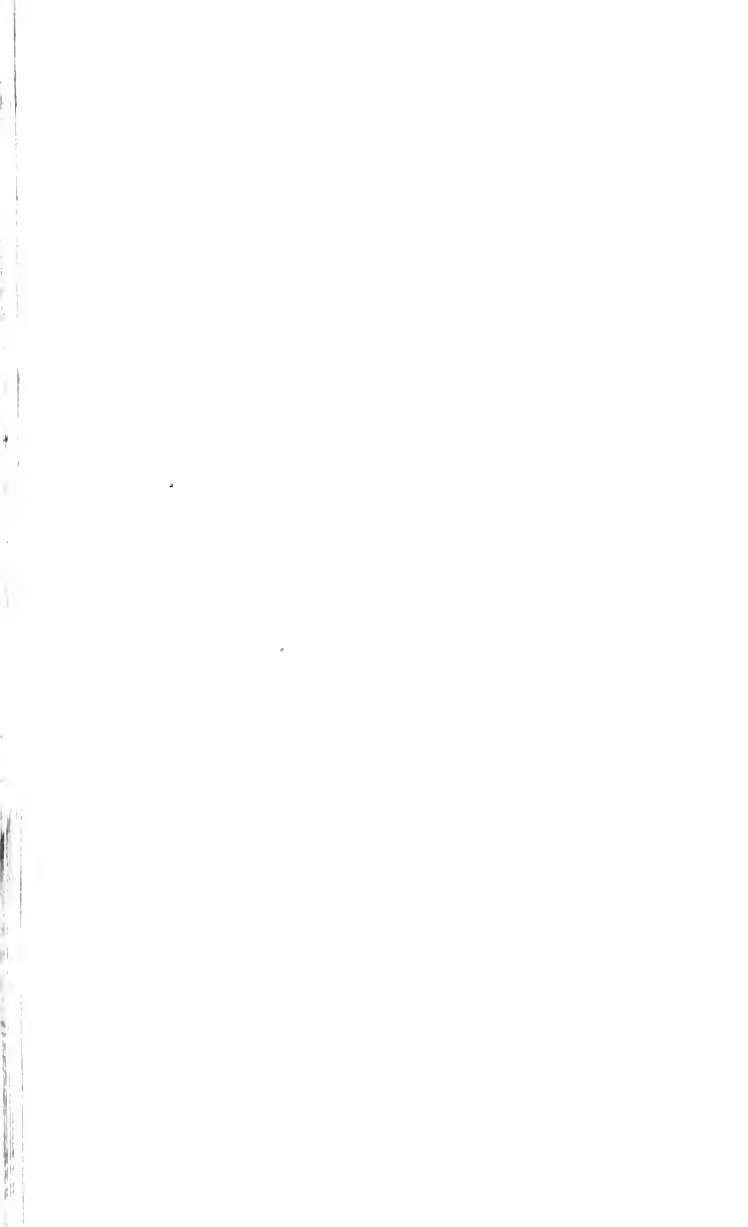
We may exculpate Luther from any pretensions to any thing bordering on supernatural aids or gifts. He was indeed filled with the deepest emotions of religion; but it was as free from fanaticism as it was far from hypocrisy. He was entirely devoted to the written word of God, and it was a devotion which he always endeavoured to guide by the light of his reason. It sometimes erred, notwithstanding. But it never at any time degenerated into mere enthusiasm; and if it was ever warped (perhaps it was not) by vanity or jealousy, at least it was never degraded by any motives of personal interest. Hence that perfect confidence in the divine protection, that entire abandonment to heavenly objects, which inspired him with a complete, yet not a fanatical, contempt for earthly considerations. From the eminence of the gospel on which he stood, he regarded with little apprehension the storms that were gathering round about him—at least, his apprehension was not for himself, but for others—for his fellow-countrymen, for his fellow-christians—and it was the wish of his heart to avert the calamities which even then hung over them.

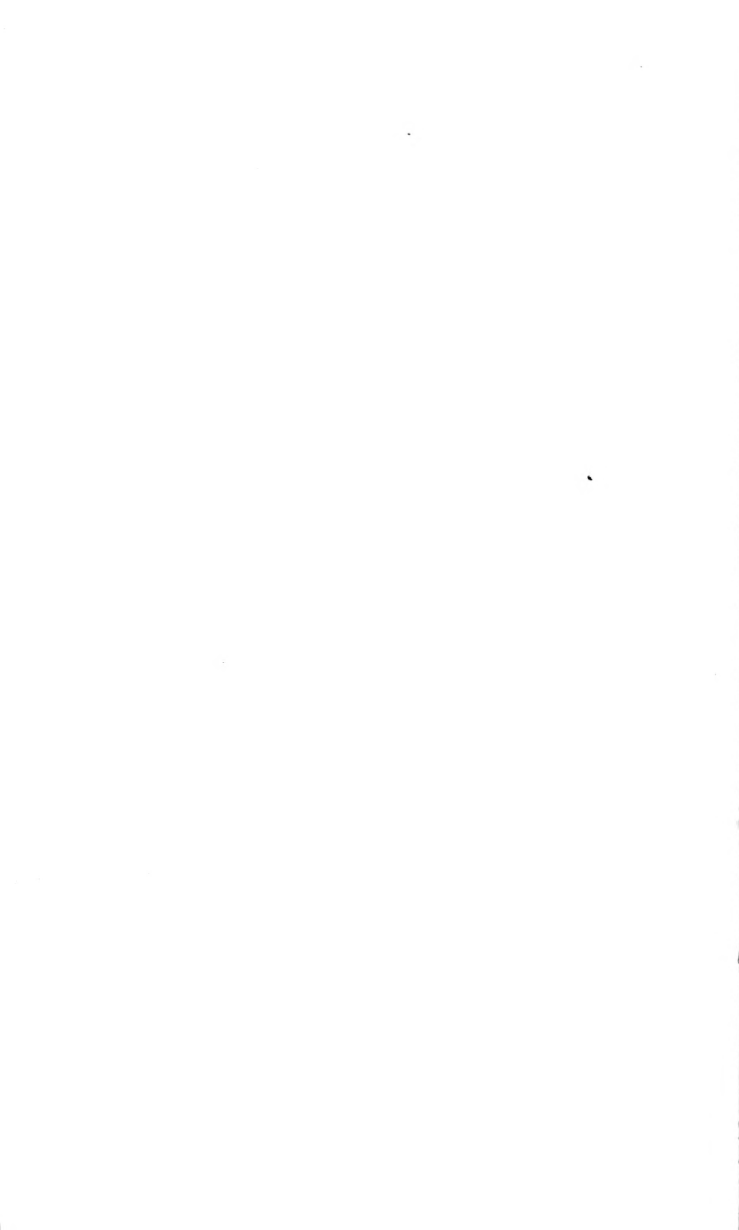
Under such circumstances, and in such a mood, Luther finally forsook his retirement, and returned to Wittenberg; and the moment in which he took that resolution was the most glorious in his life.

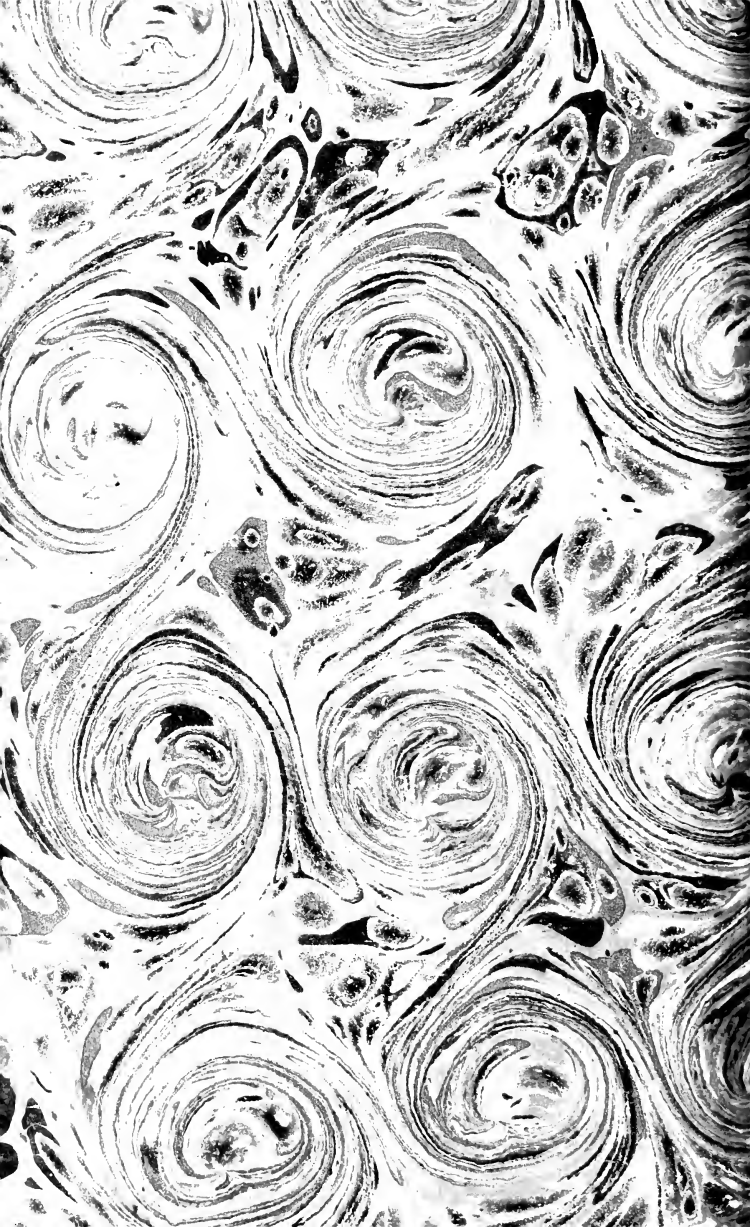
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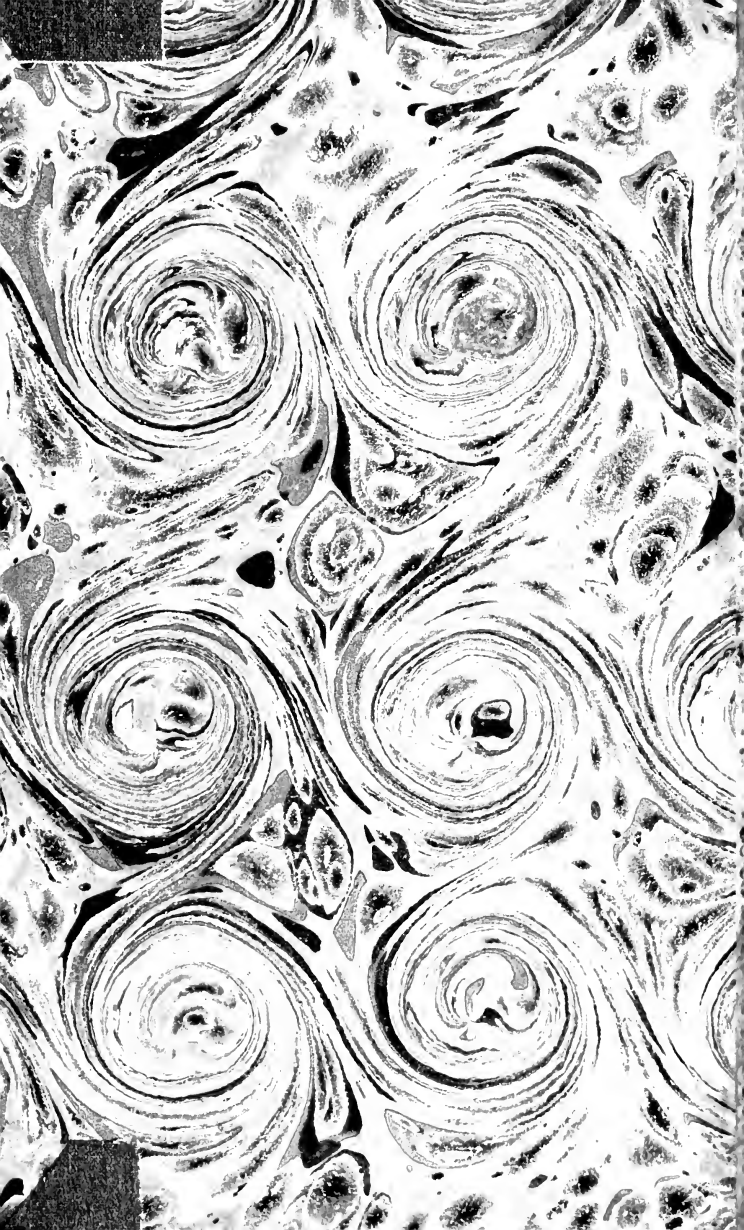












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